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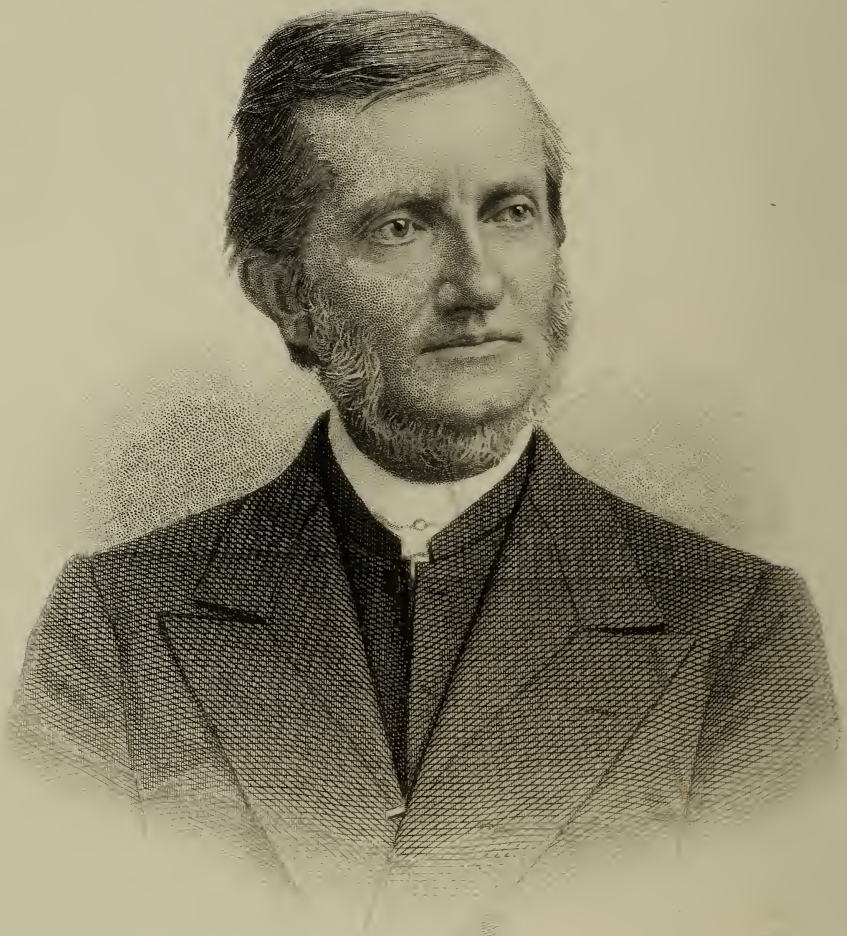

M. W. Jacobus

# THE CHRISTIAN'S HERITAGE,

AND

# Other Sermons.

BY THE LATE

## MELANCTHON W. JACOBUS, D.D., LL.D.

TOGETHER WITH

## AN UNFINISHED AUTOBIOGRAPHY.

EDITED BY HIS SON-IN-LAW,

REV. MATTHEW NEWKIRK.

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# PREFACE.

Many former parishioners and admiring hearers of Dr. Jacobus have *requested for publication* those *sermons* which they have heard with profit. And these have been gathered and are now presented, *without alteration or revision*, just as they were written and left. There has been no such selection as would display mere exegetical skill or literary power. Those who have demanded the volume have made the choice of the contents. And these favorite discourses are issued with the prayer that he, being dead, may yet speak to many hearts with words of comfort, joy, and conviction.

Among his papers has been found an

*autobiography*, commenced a few weeks before his death, and embracing only the incidents of his earlier life. Although incomplete and unrevised, it is given with the sermons to show the deep religious experiences and complete theological preparations which so remarkably fitted him for his pastoral and professional work. A filial hand has imperfectly but briefly attempted to complete the life-sketch.

M. N.

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# AUTOBIOGRAPHY.

I, Melancthon Williams Jacobus, was born in Newark, New Jersey, September 19, 1816, nearly opposite the place where I was brought up, and about midway between the First Presbyterian Church edifice and Fair Street, in the house afterwards occupied by Mr. Elisha Whitaker.

My parents, of blessed memory, were Peter Jacobus and Phebe Williams, of whom I was the first-born. My father was the youngest child of Cornelius Jacobus and Catherine Garrison, who lived at Pompton Plains, N. J. My grandfather died at eighty-two years of age, and my grandmother at ninety-eight. A young brother and sister died named "Peter Hamilton" and Elizabeth, the latter at five years of age giving marvellous evidence of the Christian life. My brother Theodore Dwight, after being twice married, died in Cincinnati, Ohio, in 1851. My sisters Hannah Catherine (now Mrs. Richard A. Donaldson—widow) and Frances Elizabeth yet survive. My father died August 28, 1866, and my mother November 20, 1872, the former aged seventy-five, and the latter eighty-one, both at 70 Park Place, the family residence in Newark, N. J.; and both are buried in Fairmount Cemetery, Newark, on the ridge overlooking the Passaic River.

The house to which my father removed and where I was brought up was the house formerly owned by Samuel Pennington, and next (north) to the residence

of Judge Smith Burnet, the garden running west along the line of the Old Burying Ground. My father's factory was adjoining the residence north, the front being about the same as the residence, making together about forty-eight feet on Broad St. Judge Burnet's residence was the place in which the first banking institution in Newark was opened. The property north of my father's abutted on the burying ground (as his factory also did), and was part of the First Presbyterian Church property. The original church stood on this ground opposite the present church (on Broad Street). The row of buildings on this leasehold front was known as the Brick Row. A stream of water ran north and south through the grounds, and was allowed to run up to my father's line, while the grounds were used for burial. After that it was filled up between the slopes, and gradually has become improved, with sad havoc upon the place of the dead. (See Harper's Monthly Magazine for October, 1876.)

My earliest recollection is of going to school to Mrs. Martha Hinsdale, in a frame annex to the house of Jabez Hayes, nearly opposite the present Third Church, Newark; and to Miss Elizabeth Woodruff in the Brick Row nearly opposite the First Church, Broad Street. I remember Lewis M. Rutherford, now of New York City, as one of my school-fellows. Afterwards I began the study of Greek and Latin at eight years of age, and went to the Newark Academy to Abraham Van Doren, who with his sons J. Livingston and Luther Halsey and J. Howard were principal and teachers in that institution, corner of Academy and Broad streets, now occupied by the post-office building. After that I think it was under the charge of Silas Sesson, and again of Mr. Rood and of Rev. Richard Croose, to whom, in turn, I was sent for instruction. After that

to Nathan Hedges for a short term. His habit of punishing boys by "*sending them to Java*" was often witnessed by me, but never experienced. It was a forced passage between his legs as a Colossus—the poor fellows receiving blows as they passed through on hands and knees. At the Newark Academy I remember William T. Mercer, Horace Baldwin, Matthias Ward, Charles Hornblower, Alex. C. M. Pennington, and others.

When a boy of ten to twelve I was thrown into contact with the apprentices and journeymen of my father's employ, the former of whom were members of his family, fed at his table, and sleeping under his roof. My father had been apprenticed to Mr. William Rogers in the saddle and harness business, and set up for himself in a small way, his only capital being his capital credit. And he was one of the earliest to introduce the southern trade to Newark along with Luther Goble in the shoe business, Isaac Meeker in clothing, Wm. Rankin in hats, and Jas. Turnbull in carriages. I was forward and active, and fell readily into company with the young men in my father's employ. And I was an amateur apprentice myself—"drawing on" trunks of horse-hide and seal-skin over wooden box-frames, stitching girths for saddles, stitching bridle-reins and making bridles. This my father encouraged, as an industrial pursuit, cultivating enterprise and keeping me out of idleness and mischief. He allowed to me the pay received by other workmen. I kept my pass-book and was credited with substantial amounts for this kind of work. I have distinct recollection of these days, of times of sore temptation in which the loose habits of the apprentices were hurtful to me, notwithstanding all my father's caution. And though my father exercised a religious watch and control over them, and provided for them a pew in the

church gallery, handsomely lined and fitted up with cushion and books, they were far from safe companions for me. I can easily see how if I had been unchecked by divine grace, I should have become very wicked. I remember skating on the small streams that ran through the parsonage property of the First Church, and having hot gin and whiskey with allspice served to the family on Christmas when a very small boy.

Dr. Jas. Richards was the pastor of my father's family, as there was no Dutch church in Newark such as my father had been brought up in at Pompton. I have very indistinct recollections of Dr. R.—my earliest associations being with Rev. Wm. T. Hamilton, who came to the First Church at the same time with Joshua T. Russell, both as candidates. They divided the church amidst high partisan excitement and angry controversy between the Hamiltonians and Russellites, as they were called; the adherents of the latter withdrawing and erecting the Third Church. Mr. Smith Burnet, living the next door to us, and related to my mother by marriage, was a leader in the secular undertaking, though not himself a church member.

I remember my father taking me to the weekly prayer-meeting with him and to the nine o'clock Sabbath morning prayer-meeting. I remember going to the Sabbath-school and Bible class in the gallery taught by Mr. Moses Lyon and by my father, when furnishing written proof-texts was the weekly exercise. My father also encouraged me to take down in the church the text and division of the sermon, and at noon-time and evening I was expected to transcribe these memoranda, with as full additions as I could recall from memory. This was a very useful exercise, inducing attention, and concentration, and cultivating an interest in the sermon. Two or three books of sermon outlines I have well filled as a result of such training.

This was suggested to my father by the example of Mr. Wm. Tuttle, Ruling Elder, who thus exercised his son Jos. N. Tuttle, now and for years a ruling elder, as our fathers were in the old First Presbyterian Church.

I remember the Saturday afternoon catechising in the lecture room by Dr. Hamilton, and his pastoral visits at the houses notified from the pulpit on the previous Sabbath.

I had the credit of being bright at study, and proficient above my fellows, and when I was about fourteen years of age my father, chiefly as I believe on account of a revival of religion in the village of Bloomfield near Newark, determined to send me thither to boarding-school. Albert Pierson was principal and teacher of Latin; and there were several candidates for the ministry in preparatory studies there — Peter Dougherty, John H. Morrison, Elias J. Richards, Aaron A. Kemble and others. Rev. Gideon A. Judd was pastor of the Presbyterian Church at Bloomfield. I requested my father to allow me to board with Dr. Mundy, a young physician near the Academy, which he granted. Dr. M. was not a Christian, though he had a charming Christian wife, and, what was to me most attractive, he had a fine bay horse, in which I became much interested. Alfred Allen and others of my town-fellows were at school there, and were greatly exercised in religious things. After I had begun my studies, they urged me to attend the prayer-meetings, which I was reluctant to do. I strove against it for some days. Dr. Mundy countenanced me in my opposition to any part in the matter. Rev. Burtis C. Magie and his brother, candidates for the ministry, strove with me, and especially the good Spirit of God; for one day at noon as I mounted the fence on my way to my boarding-place, I halted and sat on the rail,

from the beginning of my new life that this was my proper and appointed work.

When I appeared for the first time before the session in Newark, for examination with a view to uniting with the First Presbyterian Church, my father was rather inclined to have me wait till another season. The elders, especially Mr. Obadiah Woodruff, were close in their examinations. I remember that Mr. W. inquired particularly if I was not given to quickness of temper, which sometimes got the advantage. And upon frank confession of this (however ascertained), and in consideration of my youth (about fourteen), I was advised to wait, according to my father's hesitancy and desire that I should be well proved. At the next sitting for the following communion season, I was admitted at the same time with Mr. Wm. Wallace, Jr., and others.

When it became settled that I should make ready for the sophomore class in Princeton College, I sought and enjoyed the services of Wm. Dod, a recent graduate and a superior mathematician, to prepare me in the study of algebra, and I pursued some other studies with Mr. Nathan Hedges. I well remember how, in September, 1831, my father conveyed me with my baggage, bed and bedding to Princeton. We rode into the town on the open wagon (one horse) which carried its load of goods, and as I caught the first sight of the Old North College, with its prison look, I felt a cold chill run over me, of shrinking from the ordeal I was to undergo. I had the advantage of having a friend, who was a candidate for the ministry and who entered college at the same time, Aaron A. Kemble, from Haddonfield, N. J., who had also been a fellow-student at the Bloomfield Academy. He took great interest in me and did much, by daily counsel and example, to stimulate me to exertion in study.

He became my room-mate. He was a smoker. But by my father's special caution and admonition I was mercifully kept from being led under bondage to such a habit, and I have never smoked tobacco.

One of the tutors at college at this time was the Rev. Festus Hanks. His department was mathematics. In demonstrating propositions in Euclid I was summoned to the large slate blackboard, which was mounted on a huge frame in a corner of the recitation room. One day I remember when, a certain nervous timidity that afflicted me almost choked my uttterance from a fear I had of hearing my own voice, and a dread of breaking down in the recitation of what I perfectly knew, Mr. Hanks spoke and said: "Don't be afraid, Mr. Jacobus. You have no need of fear." This made my agitation all the worse, and rather served to call attention of the class to what I still hoped might escape their notice. This agitation at any reciting before the class clung to me throughout my college course, and greatly embarrassed me, requiring as it did a very special memorizing to put me in command of my lessons, and inflicting on me a severe distress on every occasion of my public appearance. Though I was the youngest in my class, so far as I know, I stood at the head and took the first honors in each year. In the junior year, Prof. Albert B. Dod, being our mathematical professor, gave to three or four of us the mark "No. 1, Distinguished"—I remember Shipley, Ed. Pendleton and myself.

In the junior year I was chosen by the Clio Hall as one of the junior orators, along with Parke Godwin and Elias J. Richards. And at the close of the senior year, I was assigned the first honor along with Edward Pendleton of the Whig Hall, my classmate from Martinsburg, Va. He was, throughout the course, a very accurate and accomplished scholar, and well deserved

a share in the honor. The Latin salutatory fell to me by lot, and the English salutatory fell to him. It was customary at that time to divide the honors, 1st, 2d, 3d, and 4th, between several. The Clio Hall treated my honor as equivalent to "*Solus*" as it was Solus in the hall division, and they accorded to me the very special honor which they were wont to give to such. The testimonial remains in the hall to this day.

After the honors were announced that same day, I met my professor, Jas. W. Alexander, on the steps of the hotel. He grasped my hand and said with heartiness: "I shall always be glad to hear of your prosperity." I shall never forget the actions or the words. He never failed to make them good.

After the commencement, though I was not yet eighteen years of age (until the nineteenth of the month), the president, Dr. Jas. Carnahan, informed me that the trustees had elected me tutor in the college, and he added his wish that I should serve. This was a surprise to me. I shrank from the tutor's exposure among rowdy college boys, as I had seen them suffer all manner of indignities, and, considering my youth, I doubted. I referred it to my father, and he referred for counsel to his former pastor, Dr. Jas. Richards. His counsel was that, as I was to be a *preacher*, he would advise me not to be a *pedagogue*. And this counsel was fully in accord with my feelings.

As I had age on my side, and had no need to hasten to my profession, I determined to take a year's respite from study for reading and active employment in my father's office. This latter I was inclined to, as my father's business was expanding, and trade with the far south and south-west was existing at that time of spirited competition. This commercial experience was indeed a great gain to me. It gave me knowledge of business and an insight into that particular

branch which enabled me to give substantial aid to my father in time of need. I made out bills, conducted correspondence, kept books, waited on buyers, and often went after them and showed them attentions which secured their orders. This was pleasant to me; yet it did not alienate me from my work. Though it seemed to my father and to some of our best friends that Providence opened the way to me to become partner with my father at that time when his business required extension and a joint headship, yet I was never for a moment moved even to a doubt about my great high calling to the ministry.

Accordingly, in 1836, I entered the Theological Seminary at Princeton.

[*September* 19*th*, 1876. *This day, a brilliant sky and inviting air, I am* SIXTY YEARS OLD, *writing these reminiscences of early life; thankful to a Covenant God for his great goodness wherewith he has distinguished my lot, and hopeful for other years of usefulness.*]

Drs. Alexander (Archibald) and Miller were professors, and Dr. Addison Alexander assistant, and Dr. John Breckinridge a portion of the time, the last as missionary professor for a very short period. Theological discussions were rife in the church, and debating clubs were formed among the students. Samuel W. Fisher and Thos. Wickes took the side of the new theology, and John McAuley dealt much in Dr. Nath'n W. Taylor's system, that "all sin consists in voluntary action."

In 1837 occurred the great schism in the church, the trial of Albert Barnes and also the formation of a new assembly, accompanying the exscinding acts of the Old School body. The students were of course

much excited. Some of them attended the trial in Philadelphia, Samuel R. Wilson among them. When Judge Rogers' decision was announced, favoring the New School claims, the professors were alarmed and queried what course they should take. But soon Charles J. Gibson's decision reversed the Rogers' verdict, and there was peace in the Seminary. My friends at Newark, as might have been expected, were strongly in sympathy with the party which was led by Dr. Fisher and Dr. Richards. But my own mind was fixed on the side of the standards and the true succession as I understood it.

When my course of three years was finished, though I had invitations to one or two fields, Dr. Alexander (Archibald), one day at the close of my course, announced to me that it had been determined to invite me to remain as tutor in Hebrew—assistant to Dr. Addison Alexander, at a salary of $200 provided by the Roswell Colt Fellowship (Paterson, N. J.). This suited my taste entirely, and I was glad to remain. It fell to me to conduct the study of the entering class in Hebrew grammar. At that time Dr. Isaac Nordheimer was preparing and putting through the press his admirable grammar, and was doing much of the work at Princeton. Here I fell in with him intimately, and enjoyed walks and talks with this remarkable man. He presented to me a copy of his grammar, first published, with his autograph. I also copied his notes and lectures on Syriac and Arabic grammar, and became deeply interested in his plans for publishing these and other works, which plans were broken up by his untimely death. I was one of a class to whom he lectured, and one of a class of Addison Alexander's in special Hebrew studies during my seminary course. This elegant scholar (Dr. A.) took lively interest in me, and gave into my hands the

Book of Malachi, to prepare a commentary, which I did in my way. This exercise served to direct my studies in the department of exegesis, and thus a taste was developed for this line of investigation.

During this year I was licensed to preach by the Presbytery of New Brunswick, sitting at Freehold, N. J., in the church of Rev. D. V. McLean. It was the period of great speculation in the morus multicaulis tree, in which Mr. McLean was prominent as a cultivator and dealer in the article. The propagation of the tree by buds was very profitable, and the excitement ran high in the production of silk-worms and their food.

During my course in the Seminary, I took active part with Robert Birch (afterwards settled as pastor of First Presbyterian Church, New Brunswick) in conducting a Sabbath-school at Blawenburgh near Princeton; the people coming for us alternately in a wagon on Saturday and bringing us back on Monday morning. This was the only approach to pulpit exercise which the custom of the Seminary allowed prior to licensure, and the licensure was not given until graduation. So I found myself set loose upon the churches with this permit to preach, before having any exercise in preaching, except the ten-minute exercise in the oratory of the Seminary two or three times in the course. It had happened with me that being in the village of Orange, N. J., I was pressed by the venerable Dr. Hillyer, then pastor of the first church, to occupy his pulpit on a Sabbath evening. Rev. Dr. Fisher was also present, and another clergyman whom I do not remember. It was claimed that there were three present (enough to form a Presbytery), and Dr. H. said they would license me for the occasion. But, as he was to be present, it was considered orderly, and I preached. This, so far as I remember, besides once

speaking of an evening in the Orange school-house, at the solicitation of Mr. Aaron Peck, was the whole of my public work in preaching prior to licensure, beyond the Sabbath addresses as conductor of the Sabbath-school already referred to.

But now, as I came to my graduation in the Theological Seminary, and had accepted the proposal announced to me by the venerable Dr. A. Alexander, to continue a year as tutor (or fellow) in Hebrew, I was not a candidate for any pulpit. I preached occasionally, however, in Newark, and elsewhere near at hand. It occurred, towards the close of the year, that I received an urgent call from the First Presbyterian Church of Brooklyn, New York. It was on this wise:

During a vacation in the Seminary, I was asked to supply the pulpit of the church from which Dr. Cox's (Sam'l Hanson) church had separated by withdrawal from the General Assembly, in the schism of 1837. This remnant (among them, prominent as elders and trustees, Adrian Van Sinderin, Daniel Colt and others, elders—and John Laidlow, Judge Peter Radcliff and others, trustees, etc., and Rev. Jonathan Greenleaf, secretary of the Seaman's Friend Society in N. Y.) was worshipping in a hall, at the corner of Fulton and Cranberry streets, where I first preached to them, not at all as a candidate, but only as a temporary supply. They, however, were pleased, after advising with Dr. Benjamin H. Rice, pastor of the church at Princeton, and Drs. Alexander, Miller and others of the Seminary, to formally present and urge their call upon me to become their pastor. This was quite contrary to my thought, as I had been devoting myself to my work in the Seminary, and had made no further preparation of sermons for settlement, not expecting so soon to enter the field. But after full consideration

of the case, in such a crisis, with such urgency of the call, I was led to accept what seemed to be my duty before God and man.

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*Here his own manuscript ends.*—Though unfinished and never revised, it is offered as more particular and interesting than any history of those earlier and formative years which could be prepared. Five weeks after the last words were penned, Dr. Jacobus "was not—for God took him." And it remains our sad duty briefly to enumerate the events of that brilliant and busy life which closed on earth at threescore years.

Having accepted an unanimous and urgent call from the First Presbyterian Church of Brooklyn, he was installed pastor in the fall of 1839, and entered upon his duties at the time when the church was involved in the controversies ensuing upon the rupture of 1838.

In January, 1840, he was married to the eldest daughter of Samuel Hayes, M. D., of Newark, N. J. He labored successfully in Brooklyn during eleven years, in which time the church was well established as one of the most flourishing in the Presbytery. It was at this time he received the first warning of impaired health. Added to his pastoral and pulpit labors, he had undertaken the preparation of a Commentary upon the Gospels, the first volume of which was published in 1848. The confinement and exhaustion of this additional work led to a disease of the throat, which rendered it necessary for him to intermit his labors, and seek refreshment and health in a foreign tour. In the fall of 1850, his congregation granted him a year's furlough for travel, and made liberal provision for supplying his pulpit. Accompanied by his wife, he travelled over the continent

of Europe and then extended his tour into Egypt and the Holy Land, returning by Constantinople and Greece. He reached home in September, 1851, greatly benefited in health, and more thoroughly furnished for his work by his journeyings among classic and Bible lands.

It was during this absence that an event occurred which changed the course of his subsequent life. The chair of Oriental and Biblical Literature in the Western Theological Seminary at Allegheny City, Penna., was vacant; and the attention of the directors being attracted to his rising fame, both as a preacher and commentator, he was chosen to fill the position. The General Assembly in May, 1851, confirmed this nomination, and duly elected him to this professorship. This call met him in a foreign land, and he was not yet thirty-five years of age. Finding his health greatly improved by the season of rest and travel, and feeling that the comparative quiet of a professorship, in an interior climate, was more suitable to his habits as well as desirable for the preservation of his life, he resigned his pastorate in Brooklyn, amid the regrets of his admiring and united people, and, accepting the chair of Oriental and Biblical Literature, removed to Allegheny City, and entered upon his duties in the early part of 1852.

This new position was favorable to the accomplishment of the ideal of his life—the completion of a commentary upon the sacred Scriptures. His volume upon "Matthew" had already been published; but now, fresh from the scenes of the Holy Land, he took up the interrupted work, and in 1853 issued his second volume on "Mark and Luke." This was followed in 1856 by his valuable work on "The Gospel of John," and in 1859 with a still more elaborate commentary on "The Acts of the Apostles." In 1862 these

"Notes on the Gospels" were republished in Edinburgh, Scotland, and obtained an extensive circulation. In 1864–5 the two volumes on "Genesis" were issued. These books evince great labor and research, and in a brief space furnish a mass of material made ready for the use of Bible students.

In February, 1858, he was called to the pastorate of the Central Presbyterian Church of Pittsburg, and for more than fourteen years ministered in addition to the duties of his professorship, with remarkable zeal, to the upbuilding of this church.

In the church—its ecclesiastical courts, its benevolent enterprises and its great controversies—he has been an active participant. He attained the highest ecclesiastical honors that could be conferred upon him. The scholastic degrees of D.D. (Jefferson College, 1852) and LL.D. (College of New Jersey, 1867) adorn his name. He is associated, historically, with the grandest event in the history of our church,—as Moderator of the Old School Assembly at the time of the Reunion in 1869–70.

In 1870, the matter of Ministerial Sustentation engaged the attention of the first Assembly of the reunited church, and a committee, of which Dr. Jacobus was chairman, was appointed to consider and report upon the question of more adequate pastoral support. In 1871, the Assembly adopted the scheme which was proposed, appointed a committee to take it in charge, and elected Dr. Jacobus to be its secretary—a post which he accepted and held for three years on the condition that he should receive no salary for his services. The duties of this position were discharged, in addition to his full professorial work in the Theological Seminary and his pastorate in Pittsburg. In 1874 he resigned his official connection with this scheme, and the General Assembly paid a handsome tribute to

the value and disinterestedness of his services by a resolution of unqualified commendation.

In the spring of 1876, he was elected secretary of the Board of Education of the Presbyterian Church, and was urgently pressed to accept this position, for which he was remarkably qualified by his long association with students for the ministry. His reasons for declining that position will appear from a brief extract of a letter written at the time:

"You may be surprised to learn that, after weighing all my duty in regard to the secretaryship, I am not able to see my way clear to accept the invitation. The work would take me so entirely off my track of life-long occupation,—in the office and on the wing, vindicating the cause, and appealing for funds, and taking a sort of oversight of candidates—that I find myself shrinking from it, and fearing that my nervous system might not bear the strain. I therefore more readily fall in with the protests from Allegheny, and with the counsel of many Eastern friends, who say that, while I am the man for the post, it is doubtful whether it is the post for me. And, much as I should like the idea of rendering the church important service, I can not be sure that even at self-sacrifice I should be able to endure it. I wait, then, the will and providence of God. I would like to pursue my Biblical studies, and put my material of twenty-five years into shape. Perhaps I may have mistaken my duty; but I have every way sought light."

At the opening of the new term of the Western Theological Seminary, September, 1876, he delivered the address: his theme, "Bible Study, Professional and Popular."

In the following month he attended the Synod of Pittsburg, of which he was a member, and took an active part in its proceedings. He addressed the Synod

upon various matters which were under discussion, and particularly made an earnest appeal on behalf of the cause of sustentation, in which he continued to take a lively interest.

On the same week he spent a day (Thursday, Oct. 26th), by special appointment in conference with Rev. Dr. C. C. Beatty about plans for the future welfare of the Seminary. His mind was full of valuable suggestions, and his enthusiastic nature looked forward with hopefulness to the future advancement of that institution. Reference being had to the half-century celebration of the Seminary next spring, he remarked, "At the same time I shall celebrate my quarter century of connection with it, and we both shall enter upon a new course of usefulness." On Friday he attended to his usual Seminary duties, and on Saturday morning (Oct. 28th) the community was startled with the intelligence that he was no more. He worked up to the very last, without the loss of an hour or a single lecture, and entered upon a higher service in heaven—dying in the harness—falling on the field—his busy, useful life ending suddenly and mysteriously, almost without seeing death or tasting its bitterness.

# I.

## THE CHRISTIAN'S HERITAGE.

"For all things are yours; whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the World, or Life, or Death, or things present, or things to come; all are yours; and ye are Christ's; and Christ is God's."—I Cor. iii. 21–23.

The apostle here takes an *inventory* of the believer's possessions, if so be he may tempt him to the enjoyment of the Christian's heritage. It is given in large figures. It is based on calculations which the world do not understand. It will seem to the uninitiated to be visionary; like those wild reckonings, which are only *on paper*, and are not sustained by the facts. But it is as if a man had been notified of immense estates, bequeathed to him beyond the seas, from a long-forgotten relative. And the man himself is slow to believe it all—has not even faith enough in the good news to go and take possession, or even to enter his claim. And so the Christian, by the death of his Kinsman Redeemer, the Lord Jesus Christ, has become heir to a patrimony in two worlds, which transcends all our arithmetic.

How seldom do we think of the term Testament, as a legacy, and a legacy to you and me. It is

not often noticed, how this Gospel announcement is made as a *preface* to the *Decalogue*, and must be read and received before any one of the commandments can be understood or obeyed—"I am the *Lord thy God*—that HAVE *brought* thee OUT of the land of Egypt, and out of the house of bondage." "Thou shalt have no other gods before me."

The apostle reaches his point in the text by exhorting these Corinthians against their narrow jealousies, which divided their Christian interests. He advances the large idea, that instead of boasting ourselves against each other, as to our Christian privileges, we ought rather to be sharers in each other's joy. For this Christian treasure that we have in the church and the ministry, is not such as is reduced by others sharing it. It is like the *light*, which is its scriptural emblem. It becomes brighter all around, by others lighting their torches from it. Therefore all that we have from Christ is ours—and all that our brethren have from Christ may be enjoyed as ours also, if we will only enter into their joy. Just as, even in worldly property, where the *mine* and the *thine* are so distinctly pressed, I may enter into the joy of my neighbor, and may share his possessions, by looking out upon his gardens and groves, and getting the comfort of them, without the care of their keeping. Just as I may even enjoy his happiness, as a sharer with him in all that blesses his lot, if I have only the large-heartedness to "rejoice with them that do rejoice."

I remember just such a man on Brooklyn Heights,

looking out daily from his window upon that beautiful bay, with its fairy scenes; and he used often to say to me, "I would not take a thousand dollars for my interest in Governor's Island." He made it daily his own, by roaming over it with his eye, and feeling all the charm of it, as an appendage of his grounds, and it was quite as though he had the title deed for it, only without the taxes and the care. For no one could carry it away from its lovely seat in the bosom of that glorious water, and no one could shut it out from his view. And therefore, though the government owned it for an arsenal grounds, it was his for all his better purpose of enchanting scenery.

There are *three* couplets here—under which the *all things* are grouped.

The Church and the World; Life and Death; The Present and the Future.

The first item in the Christian's inventory is—that the *Christian ministry is yours.* Paul, Apollos, Cephas—they all belong to the believer. "For who is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers by whom ye believed?" What is their *function*, but to instruct, guide, and comfort you—to proclaim to you the Gospel message, and to help you on to glory? Not alone your own pastor, nor alone the ministers of your own denomination even, whom you have cherished and boasted; but others also, and the whole company of them, are yours for Christian service, and yours as bound up with you in the same great interest, which you and they together represent. They belong to you,

as they do not to the outside world, who will have none of their care and guidance. They belong to you as the shepherd belongs to the flock—as the teacher belongs to the school. They are not yours to *set up* one against another—not to criticise, and to neglect, and to condemn. But they are all yours with their respective gifts and qualities, to profit by them all. The one may give more instruction, the other more admonition or consolation. And no one of the true ministers of Christ, is so weak or so humble, but he can dispense to you the truth from the skies—just as an infant can cast a seed into the furrow, as well as an archangel.

And who can calculate what wealth of benefit and blessing is involved in this single item, to a believer! Strike out all that you get from the ministrations of the sanctuary, and from the precept and example, or influence of the Christian ministry in any household or community, from childhood up, and what a blank is left. If you do not get good from the minister, it is most likely that you do not value the message. For what is the man to the message? A menial servant can bring me news from my home that shall gladden my heart forever. The meanest minister brings you the good news from heaven.

But a second item in this *inventory* of the Christian's estate, is THE WORLD. This is a large item. Is there no mistake? Or is it on the list only by some theological fiction or exaggeration? Can it fairly be said of every Christian, that *the world* is his—that be he prince or pauper—master or slave

—millionaire or beggar—HE OWNS THE WORLD? That what the wordling is striving to gain at the peril of his own soul, even the whole world, he has gained along with the saving of his soul, and even by *means* of his soul's salvation? But, is it not rather said in the Scripture, that the world is his *enemy*, and that the world's friendship is enmity with God?

Let us see. I undertake to *emphasize* it. *The world is the Christian's*, first of all, *because his Father made it and owns it.* "If children then heirs, heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ." And the Christian is the man who is rightful owner and heir of the world. It was made for him, and not for the worldling—not for the man who is debased and debauched by it, and who abuses its enjoyments, to shame and sin. All nature is meant to minister to the child of God. These laws of the physical world are bidden to subserve his highest interest. The stars hold on their courses, and the seasons run their round for him, and the whole cosmos is a wondrous mechanism, in which all things are so constructed as to co-work for him—all the forces and appliances working together for his good. The man who claims the world as his own, and is bent on enjoying it in defiance of God, lives only by sufferance, and as a child of pleasure, he is dead while he liveth.

And then again, *the world* is the Christian's, in its *highest idea;* to get all the benefit of it, without the mischief and the curse. He is master of it and not slave to it. Have you thought that the world

is just that which the *Christian gives up, relinquishes*, foregoes, by his Christian vocation? that this whole domain of earthly pleasure is that which he forswears and denies himself? And that here is the weight that is to be cast into the scale, when you weigh over against all this, *his treasures in the skies?* This is the view of *some.* And so, many an uninitiated one, regrets, sometimes, that he must forfeit so much to be a Christian—and wishes he could consistently carry into the Christian life certain worldly pleasures that he is expected to resign. Is this the true idea? Nay. The Christian has discovered what is the higher domain of pleasure to be enjoyed in the world where its poisons are not tasted, but only its true delights—where its temptations are mastered, and only its pure, solid and lasting benefits are enjoyed—where the higher taste excludes the low, debasing gratifications, and finds a sphere for the purer appetites, and a range for the nobler desires. These use the world as not abusing it.

Blessed are the meek (says Jesus), for they shall *inherit the earth.* The Christian grace of *meekness* that is moderate in its desire and that enters into the joy of others as if it were its own, making it its own—this is a beatitude. Blessed such are and must be. *Happiness* must have its sources within the soul. And anywhere outside the stream can rise only to this level of the fountain within. So says the Psalmist, "The meek shall inherit the earth, and shall delight themselves in the abundance of *peace.*" And that is a kind and quality of abun-

dance, which is more than abundance of treasure or of worldly estates—the *abundance of peace.* It is not what a man can show his legal claims and titles for. It is rather what he really *possesses and enjoys* as part of himself, which makes him an *owner.* And what he *has* locked up securely in his breast, he *possesses* and *owns* in the highest possible sense, as the key to all true enjoyment.

I ask you what a man is *worth.* And you say so many dollars, as if gold were the standard of *worth.* When you speak of a *man*, you know, if you think a moment, that his real worth consists of *principle*—not money principle, but moral principle. *Gold* is worth only what it will purchase for you. You can't eat it. You can't make a bed or pillow of it. You get the good of it only when you part with it for something else. And gold will not buy happiness. For happiness is not a mercantile commodity. The noble vessel that ploughs through the ocean, and rides upon the wave, and makes even its currents a propelling power for the passage across, *that* is the vessel to which *the ocean belongs*, and not that other vessel that has the sea come up over its bulwarks, and rush in at the cabin doors, and fill it, and drown it to the depths.

But the *third* item in this inventory of the Christian's estate, is, LIFE. Understand it. LIFE is the heritage of the Christian. There is a mere physical life which we have in common with the browsing herd. And *life*, to the multitude, is the mere *brute being.* And the highest idea of life, with such, is to enjoy all the physical functions, and

to gratify all the appetites, and to regale all the senses to the full. But this is not *life*, as a man is made to enjoy it, in its higher qualities, and for its nobler ends. This is life every way narrowed and hampered in its sphere of pleasure by the poisons of sin, and it is life, sadly, awfully bounded and cut short by *death*. But the Christian, by his very principle of living, has *life* as a noble heritage. And it is *life* in all the most exalted and harmonious play of the mental and moral powers.

This is not arbitrary. Could you even say that a wild Indian, ranging over the fields for his game and living as a happy child of nature, could have *life* in any such high sense as the man of cultivated intellect, and of refined taste, and of spiritual perceptions? *No!* Here is the secret. The *Christian life*, that is "hid with Christ in God"—that enters into the very enjoyment of God, that lives in sympathy with God's work, that spans the gulf between the eternities, and already enters into God's *rest*, and partakes of the divine nature—already lives beyond the grave, already sets the affections upon the things where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God; this Christian life is the highest style of life, has all the elements and conditions of pure, happy, useful, blessed living. Only such a man knows what it is to *live*—to live close beside the fountain of life—where new draughts of life can be partaken in ever fresh supplies—and where the *life* itself is life and light also —*the life*, the light of men—not ignorant grovelling life, that merely vegetates, but life elevated,

illuminated, and in affinity with God. Do *they* own life, who claim the passing enjoyment as life's great end? They whose life is a life of fashion, a life of sport, a life of gaiety and indulgence—a life of worldliness and vanity, and sin and shame? Is *that life?* And are *they life's owners?* If it were even a *life* as sinless as that of the butterfly, would it be LIFE, as that of the *saint*, who lives to God, and goes to live like a seraph, in the presence and blessedness of God forever?

And seeing that the Christian possesses *life* in its highest quality, has he not also the clue to life's secrets, and the key to life's richest stores?

Take the multitude, and so many have high physical life, and have ample means to make *life happy*, but mistake the idea of happiness; are trying to get life's full benefit by *wealth hoarded*, when the true happiness is in active charities, and in wealth liberally dispensed. Some will be liberal only when they die, so they deny themselves the happiness of living as God has planned it for them, and proposed it to them, in vain.

But take the man whose life daily duplicates itself by sharing what he has with others—who enters into sympathy with Christ's work on earth, and so becomes a Saviour also in his humble sphere; that man has discovered the true life, that is "hid with Christ in God"; that man has found the true luxury of living; there is somewhat in that life, that is divine-human, and godly, and Christ-like; and such a life is angelic in its affinity with the better world. It is the *life of God* in the

soul *of man!* And to live such a noble, unselfish, happy life, belongs to the Christian, as it does not to any other. "He most lives, who thinks most, feels the noblest, acts the best." And *life* to the Christian, is just a scene of divine and angelic ministries on his behalf. 'Tis just his daily training for glory. It is not an *end*, but a *means* to an end. It takes hold already upon heaven, which is only the life beyond.

I said to an aged Christian lady, as she came out from the bedside of a dying friend, "My dear madam, you too have come near the end, and must soon die also." "Ah!" said she, with beaming face, "ah, I shall then only just *begin to live!*" All providential dealings are the believer's for eternal blessedness, and *life* is his in the highest sense, because interpreted and used aright. It is the unfolding of the divine counsels of *grace and love* towards him, in his pupilage for the skies. And all that life can yield of experience in divine things, of rich discovery of God's truth and covenant, and of preparedness for the life beyond, is his. And this is the highest glory of the present life, which only the Christian man can possess.

But the Christian's estate stretches even farther than this. It is not more true that the *world* and *life* are his, than that DEATH is his also. This is an item that lies beyond our common sphere of knowledge. We see the outward phenomena of death, in which it is common to all. And the Christian is not, in any such sense, the owner of death, as to control his movements, or to escape

his summons. And yet, though he must bow his head as low as any in the grave, death belongs to him, as it does not to any other. *Other men* indeed belong to *death*. They are death's victims, death's prey. Death has all his terrific power over them, holding them in bondage here, by the fear of his blow, and holding them in eternal bondage hereafter, under the second death. Sometimes it is a living death they live, and then death gets so much the mastery, that they fall prematurely under his power.

But death is yours, my Christian brother, in the sense that all its circumstances are arranged for your best interest. It will come only as it is sent to bless you—only as it comes to consummate God's covenant blessing in your case. Just *at* what moment, *in* what manner, *on* what spot, *by* what disease or so-called casualty—just with what processes of wasting or not, all as particularly adjusted to your case, as light is adjusted to the eye, or sound to the ear, to produce the most vivid impression, or the most exquisite harmony, *so* death shall come ministering to you. And so it shall be to you, the *Son of Man's* coming to fold you in his arms, while death only wraps his dark mantle over you for the passage.

God makes no mistakes. There is no such thing as accident, or casualty, or fatality with him. None whatever! Just when your seat is ready at the table the bell will ring, and the messenger will come to conduct you in. Just when your particular mansion in the Father's house is entirely pre-

pared—when the last picture is hung on the wall, and the last item of furniture is in its place—then you shall be bidden to enter in, and take possession. Some of the pictures are painting now, from these life scenes, not yet finished. The map of the way in which God has led you is not yet completed. Some of the furniture must be transferred from these earthly mansions, and some of the articles are carving now, with your own fingers.

Look at that Lazarus at the gate of Dives. Men see the gasping beggar. And they see the dogs. But they do not see the ANGELS, who are there to escort him to Abraham's bosom. Men call it *death.* The angels call it *life.* Death is *his;* the property of that beggar,—belongs to him—does him distinguished service. The *death*-angel holds out the signal to the angels of light, and they come with torches for the dark valley, and bear away the heavenly guest to glory.

But look at *Dives. He* belongs to *death.* What are all the purple, and fine linen, and sumptuous fare? What a record! "The rich man also died and was buried." No escort of angels, no Abraham's bosom. Carry out the corpse. Bury him in his splendid tomb. His riches should have made a friend of that Lazarus to welcome him to the everlasting habitations. But no! He left Lazarus to the dogs. And he goes now to his own place, where not even the *dogs* can minister to him. All the pomp of a princely funeral is his—to cover death's doings—to divert men's attention from the dark *under-world,* where he is lifting up

his eyes in torment. He could have no control of death's terror—could get no single service from the monster—could not buy any alleviation of death's bitterness and sting, with all his wealth. He must go down to the grave, unguarded and unhelped, and down to the abyss of despair, *unsaved!* He is death's victim—death's prey. He has no friend and helper, to go down with him to the dark valley, and across the deep river. None. No Jesus "who hath abolished death" for him. None!

But *you*, my Christian brother, as surely as you are a Christian, are not a subject of death's dark empire. You can plead your heavenly citizenship. You can say to the death-angel, "I am a Christian citizen and free born by virtue of relationship to Christ." You can claim exemption from the bondage of death. He can not impress you into his ranks. You are a free man of Christ Jesus. You can not be holden of death, for you belong to one who has *met* death, and vanquished death, and has the keys of death's dark palaces, and can open his dungeons, and break his sceptre, at His will.

> "One moment here, so low, so agonized,
> And *then*—beyond the stars."

Need I say more! Is not this enough for any man's heritage? Does it not cover all possible interests? If other words were needful, or could add any thing to these large items—if you could ever be in circumstances to despond, or distrust, after all these large assurances—then hear the apostle: "Things present, and things to come," are

*yours!* Ah! I know. It is these surroundings of the hour. It is this present struggle and conflict. Or this passing cloud of affliction—or this thunder clap which has just burst over our heads. It is this particular strait of to-day—it is this burden—it is these tears—it is this *heart-ache*—which sets aside all large generalities, and makes us beg for some assurance, that will reach down to our present case.

My Christian brother! *Things present* are yours! No matter what they are. Not merely *the past*, which has been conquered—with all its strong temptations and gloomy fears, and fiery trials; but *this present*—these very things that concern you so much to-day—these vexations—these disappointments—these bereavements—these contingencies—these mysteries of Providence, which you would so like to have interpreted—they are all *yours!* You are master of the situation, if you knew the facts. They are working together, and co-working, with all other things, for your good.

And, what is yet more amazing, "*Things to come*" are yours! All that undiscovered, unrevealed future, with all its events—its hopes and fears—its smiles and tears—all its tidings of joy and sorrow—all its new friendships and its broken ties—all its dreams, and its realities, as they open upon you, like an Apocalypse, day by day. *They are all yours.* And nothing can eventuate, that is not in your interest. The future is yours. The unfoldings of to-morrow will be sure to pour into your bosom the materials for Christian joy, if you

rightly read and receive them. Be the day dark or bright—come sunshine or come storm; just where you are so fearful—just where you are entering with a shudder into the cloud—there the voice out of the cloud tells you *it is Jesus!* And it is like the cloud of the Visible Presence, that hung over the Mercy-seat, in the holiest of all—it is the cloud of the divine glory.

Yes! you may look down the vista of futurity, where men's hearts fail them for fear of all that is coming on. You may even see the *storm-cloud* gathering thick and heavy in your horizon. You may have dreary presage of troubles, losses, sicknesses. You may shudder to have the veil lifted, that hides the things to come. And yet, you may look into the face all the reverse and distress and death agony, that you know must sometime happen, and here is the assurance. *Things to come are all yours!* All your future is compassed by God's covenant of love. Every cloud is bright to you from your upper side position. No good thing shall he withhold from you. No one shall harm you. No one shall pluck you out of his hands. Angels shall camp around your dwelling, and shall bear you up in their arms, lest you dash your foot against a stone! Your track is already laid, to where it opens into the heavenly paradise. The ladder from your stony pillow has its top in glory, and has the angels traversing it meanwhile, in ministries of love to you.

And *all things* are yours! There is nothing which is not yours.

"If thou hast wherewithal to spice a draught when griefs prevail,
And for the future time art heir to the Isle of Spices,
Is it not fair?"

Your afflictions are burdens, just as the bird's wings are burdens on his back by which he may soar to the skies,—just as buoys are burdens to the wreck to float it to the surface—just as the life-preserver is a burden bound fast to a man to keep him from sinking in the sea. This darkness is but the shadow of His wing. Beyond all peradventure —far beyond all possible contingency—by His word of power and grace, who rules the universe—by his covenant and oath, who can never fail, the universe is yours! Poor sinner that you are, —deserving only of perdition,—once under the awful doom of everlasting death, having nothing to-day in your own right, but sin and shame—even you, without reserve or qualification, may look out upon the vast domain of creation, providence and redemption, and there is nothing in it all, but you can claim as your own, in Christ Jesus. You are infinitely richer than you had thought. Up! out of your tears, and darkness, and ashes—thou child of poverty—child of sorrow. All things are yours. You are a king and a prince unto God. These doubts, this darkness, ill become one of such princely birth and of such vast possessions. Live in some manner becoming your high rank, and splendid heritage. Paul—Apollos—Cephas—all God's ministers in all the church. The world, with all its interests. *Life*, with all its truest joys

Death, with all its sternest realities. *Things present*, as you feel them pressing with all their weight upon you, and *things to come*, as you dread to confront them. *All are yours.* Perfumes of paradise around the broken vases of earthly delights—and death itself only the bursting of the shell for the springing forth of the soul, to the new and higher life in glory!

And now, all that is asked of you, is that you enter fully upon your estate and enjoy its splendid benefits. Walk worthily of this high vocation wherewith you are called. "For *all things are yours!* Paul, Apollos, Cephas, the world, life, death, things present—things to come! *All are yours.*" Is there any thing higher, and more assuring? "And ye are Christ's." Can there be any thing higher, that shall link you fast to the very throne, and the very Person of the Almighty? "*And Christ is God's.*"

## II.

### LOSING OR SAVING LIFE.

"For whosoever will save his life shall lose it; but whosoever shall lose his life for my sake and the Gospel's, the same shall save it."—MARK viii. 35.

*To find one's* life, so as to discover the secret of happy and successful living—this is the great, high problem among men. Many a man spends his lifetime in vain queries about life,—how he shall best enjoy it,—or best employ it to earthly gains,—or best accomplish the true end of living. Many a man is all his life long finding out *where to live* and how to live, so as to have the best climate, or the most comforts, or the choicest friends, or the greenest old age. If one could only know life's secret at the outstart, and act accordingly, then, indeed, such an one would seize upon the very ideal living, and would exhibit a life beautiful and blessed, with all the symmetry of a well-fashioned character and experience.

To understand this momentous sentence, you must read the text in its connection. The same Jesus had just said, "Whosoever will save his life shall lose it." And the plain meaning is, that whoever is set upon getting out of his life the most of

selfish ease and indulgence, and mere self-gratification, shall be woefully disappointed, and shall come to utter loss of all life's proper good.

A young man says, "I will live for myself. I will lose no opportunity to make money. I will rise early and sit up late. I will toil on, day and night, for wealth. I will have my large possessions—adding house to house, and field to field. I will get gain from the rich and gain from the poor,—by honest industry; and if need be, by dishonest exaction. I will subsidize the labor of the workman, and the skill of the mechanic, and nothing shall escape my eye that can add a farthing to my increase. I will hold my gains with a rigid grasp. Others may give to the needy, and help forward the great schemes of beneficence, *but not I.* I will have my splendid mansion and my costly equipage, servants and dependents at every turn. I will be master and owner of whatever can add to human pleasure or ambition." How often such a greed overdoes itself! The man fails in getting what he so passionately craves. Or he fails as likely in getting this, and losing all *beside*, —in getting wealth and losing health,—getting goods and losing God. Nay he fails by getting a surfeit and losing the appetite. "For the world passeth away and the lust thereof." He shall lose his life by the very eagerness of the grasp with which he seeks to gain it, to mere selfish ends. Just as you sometimes see the drowning man, in the very convulsive struggle for life, seize his rescuer by the throat, and disable him and himself

also, so that they sink together. Mere selfishness, as we daily see it, defeats itself. Overreaching in business oftenest overreaches itself. Greed of gain will sometimes perish by satiety,—will stuff its morbid maw, so as to destroy itself by the overload. Just as any physical self-indulgence constantly works disgust with the indulgence itself, and, by its more repeated gratification, breaks the appetite, and so loses the power to enjoy itself.

Such paradoxes are deeply rooted in the constitution and course of nature. This is nothing arbitrary with God. True religion has its divine sources deeply welling up within the soul. And it is no vain promise. It is even, in part, the working of a natural principle, that is announced by Jesus in the text. "Whosoever shall lose his life, for my sake and the Gospel's, the same shall save it."

We are then to *save* life by *losing* it? Yes! This is the divine problem. And this is not so paradoxical as might seem. We know how one may often save time by losing it,—save a day by losing an hour. We know how we often gain by giving,—even gain money by giving it away,—gain friendships by giving out our friendships to others. And how, as it is with the farmer, that by throwing away some of his last year's crop into the furrow, he gains a harvest of an hundred fold. So it is everywhere, that we must lose somewhat in order to gain more. Somewhat of time,—of energy,—of capital must be sacrificed in order to reap a return of kindred benefits.

So it is with even the Gospel benefits, that though they are free and can not be bought in the sense of being bargained for, they must nevertheless be bought, in the sense of parting with something for their possession. "Buy wine and milk, without money and without price." And so indeed, we solve that profound mystery of Christ's teaching,—that it is more blessed to give than it is to *receive*,—not as if it were *all* giving, and no receiving. But because the blessedness is in kind, —in actual *receiving* a *return* of the *giving*—good measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over, of gifts into the lap and bosom.

And herein, too, lies the philosophy of this constructive suicide,—this losing one's life by saving it,—that when one narrows his aims and enjoyments within the sphere of his own mere self,—excluding all other aims, and all share in others' well-being—*that* is just such a stagnation of soul as inevitably dries up the better nature and destroys the better self. The fountain that overflows and brims over with its fulness is the fountain that keeps fresh with its living waters. And this is the place where we choose to drink rather than from any stagnant pool. The announcement of the text is this—that living for Christ and the Gospel, so as to forget self,—so as to subordinate selfish aims and pursuits,—so as to lose one's self in this higher living, is the true secret of life,—of living to purpose—and of that higher style of life, which realizes life's greatest and best end. It is a first principle in this whole matter, that happiness

is not found by seeking it as an *end*. Nothing is truer, in all experience, than that the pleasure-seeker is the pleasure-loser—eaten up with greed of pleasure—devoured by the appetite of indulgence. "She that liveth in pleasure, is dead while she liveth." And a true happiness comes from having true objects of pursuit and true tastes for gratification.

It is in view of this fundamental constitutional fact, that Jesus Christ, the Prince of Life, proposes *himself* as the personal object of life, and his Gospel as the proper interest to be cherished in all our living; and that he who will most lose his life in this direction shall most truly and effectually save it unto life eternal.

Considering that it is hard to persuade men of this seeming contradiction,—we must clearly understand *what* this losing one's life for Christ and his Gospel *means*. We know something of what it means when one loses his life for a friend, by actually dying to save another—as when one plunges into the wave, and drowns in the effort to rescue a sinking fellow,—or as when one rushes into the burning chamber and is consumed in the attempt to save another,—or as when one steps in and takes the deadly blow that is levelled against a bosom friend. We know how love sometimes flames into such an all-absorbing passion, as actually revels in such self-sacrifice—and cheerfully yields up life itself, even in the fruitless endeavor to save one best beloved—wife, mother, sister, child.

But the *losing of life* contemplated in the text

is not necessarily this, though this may also be included in it. It is rather the *spirit* which may *sometimes* so express itself, and which stands ready for this actual yielding up of life at the instant, if need be. It is no falling under the wheels of any Juggernaut. But as it lies within reach of all, it is rather the daily cross-bearing and self-denial, the self-abnegation and self-sacrifice, that willingly loses sight of self in the Master, and in the absorbing aim to serve his Gospel cause.

Take it, as it appears in the burning zeal of a true missionary who says, I will live for Christ. I will quit my home, my friends, my comforts, and go out far away amongst strangers, amongst savages. I will give up the joy of these refinements and indulgences that belong to civilized society, and I will spend my days in telling of Christ to the pagan, and in lighting up his darkened soul with this religion of Christ, and in cheering the home of the barbarian with this Gospel of Jesus. I will forget my country—forget my church privileges—forget my own home pleasures. I will forget the joy of greeting beloved friends of my childhood and youth, and I will be an exile from all these things for Jesus, and for the joy of giving this religion to the destitute. Say, then, is such a life lost, or found?

Lost lives are everywhere around us. Faculties prostituted, energies misdirected, souls wrecked. But not here. Jesus Christ himself was a man of *joys*, as well as of sorrows; nay of joys springing out of his sorrows; *finding* his earthly life in *losing*

it, never disappointed, never foiled in his purpose, never daunted nor overcome, even in Gethsemane or on the cross, always rising up from under every crushing weight, and singing at the last, not in despair, but in triumph, "*It is finished.*"

And there are men of such a stamp and style, whose record is in history, as the *Christian men* of the race—missionaries like Mills and Brainard and Williams of Erromanga, the American martyrs of India, and men at home who delight to give to Christ and his Gospel all their means, and poor widows who give him all their living. And there are yet tender spirits like Harriet Newell, who sanctified womanhood in the service of Christ and his Gospel for a perishing race.

Can we not plainly see how the missionary in Christ's footsteps may abound in joys that spring out of his privations,—how such an one may find *his life*, in finding a vocation so noble, and an aim so genial and spiritual; how it may even be a daily charm and rapture to be so set on the highest ends of living—and so absorbed in what is true and loving and good? Can we not see how such an one enters upon a daily culture of the best tastes, and throws off a thousand cramping, crippling constraints of a mere conventional and false living, for the honest, pure, and peaceful cultivation of things pertaining to the soul? Men may not understand it. But such a finding of *missionary* life is often a finding of life as a *discovery;* as where one has found lost health, or a lost home, or a lost friend, or a lost treasure. And take any man of

a true Gospelizing spirit, at home or abroad, who says, "I will live for Christ and not for self—for Christ even more than for parents, or wife, or children." We know what it is to forget self for the darlings of the household. And this is a *joy!* This is a pure pleasure! The very aim to gladden the home circle with gifts or with new additions to their comfort,—this becomes an element of real happiness, in the cup of daily toil and privation, and makes even the most exhausting, wasting work minister to the soul's refreshment.

But this person of Jesus, and this cause of his Gospel, is an object of living still higher, purer, better. It does not exclude the home objects. It only sanctifies all that sweet, domestic affection, and absorbs it in the nobler zeal of doing all things at home or abroad, for Christ and his cause. The man says, "I will aim to serve Christ in every thing—in business, working for Christ,—in society, speaking and acting for Christ,—in the home circle, *living for* CHRIST—keeping eye upon his example—studying his pleasure—aiming to promote his cause *in doors*, and *out* of doors—and subordinating self, selfish ease, and selfish emolument to the promoting of his Gospel. To this end, in the thousand channels of active work and influence, I will seek to be sanctified wholly—to have my business calling sanctified, and my plans, and aims, and calculations sanctified. I will *deny myself.* I will forego a personal gratification, if so be, I may advance his cause. I will spare from my personal expenses to give to his treasury, and *that* not

merely on a rare occasion, but as I have opportunity,—and not merely so far as is convenient, but where it is *inconvenient*, and even damaging to my ease, and to my estate. I will take up my cross daily and follow Christ,—as a cross-bearing disciple,—not found without my cross—subordinating self to the Master—having a will subdued to his will, and the whole man subjugated to his service." Then it is the reign of peace, and love, and pleasure in the soul.

There are living examples of this. Men who have left houses and lands in this sense, who have willingly submitted to privations—have yielded up themselves a living sacrifice—subsidizing all for Christ—not in any spirit of fanaticism, nor in any heartless routine of monastic living, but in a calm, earnest, well-advised, sober-minded devotement of themselves to Christ, manifestly making this their all in all for life! In the world's eye, such "lose their life." But in God's eye such find their life and save it in the very worldly loss of it.

*Can* such a life of loss be attractive? Is there any thing in it that looks like the discovery of a great secret—like opening a mine of gold—like unburying hidden treasure? Let us see. First of all. *As regards life's great ends.* Life is found or lost, and saved or lost, according as it realizes or not its true idea. This involves a high constitutional question of *what Life is*, in its noblest and best realization, and how far any life is a true life, founded on true principle, seeking true ends; or how far it is *false*, in all its ideas and tendencies.

Biologists who are speculating about the origin of life, and do not study its ends, find themselves absorbed in questions of life-cells, and tissues, and protoplasms, and never discover the *life eternal.* If the soul is made for God, then it can have its nature satisfied only in God. It can not be a true and noble soul—it can not even enjoy true happiness out of its proper sphere. *All* that may *seem* to be joy is but the animal gratification of the hour, or the low, grovelling indulgence of a false taste, that brings its swift-dealing penalty.

Now take a soul absorbed in the service of Christ and his Gospel—not the monkish religionist, dealing in the mere form and ritual of service, but the hearty, earnest Christian worker, alive to the cause of Christ and his Gospel. *There* is a harmony of the mental and moral powers,—*there* is a proper satisfaction in the things of God, such as the worldling never finds in the things of *Mammon.* The soul and body are so far answering their true ends. And there is a fulfilment of life's great purpose, which is a conscious blessedness.

Men need to be convinced of what life is in this highest sense. They need to have the parable of the rich fool constantly spoken, to teach them that "a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth"—that the most opulent and pampered lord is often the most menial slave,—that under the purple and fine linen, and sumptuous board, there is the soul at war with the high ends of its being, and so, *necessarily* ill at ease—disconcerted, and discon-

tented,—never truly at peace—having never any Sabbath within. Such a life is a splendid failure.

Now, the pleasure of a soul answering its high end—the pleasure of all the intellectual, moral and spiritual functions having their proper play,—working with all the charm of fulfilling their constitutional design—no jar—no contradiction—this is blessedness akin to the blessedness of God. This is the peace of God which passeth all understanding. Truth, principle, conscience, faith are the highest prizes of life—the choicest treasures of the soul. Bunyan's Pilgrim lodged in the Palace Beautiful, and slept in the chamber called Peace, and in the morning looked out upon the Delectable Mountains, and saw Immanuel's land from the house-top.

And then, further, the self-renouncement which subjects one's reason and opinion and option to the word and will of Christ—this is the key to all true and happy and successful living. It is a divine revelation which comes with power to a man who is truly taught of God, that he who *trusteth* in his own heart is a *fool*. And this is sound doctrine, elicited often by the deepest experience of life. *Some other one* to trust in—some other one to follow—higher and better than self—this is the grand discovery of life which realizes life's great end. This is no sinking of one's manhood. It is only stripping off the tinsel and gewgaw of childish folly, to put on the proper garb and style of manliness—where one becomes the most of a man by communion with the God-man—deriving of his

fulness—copying his example—relying upon his grace, and following his counsel and guidance to glory.

And this is just the condition in which even disappointment brings no pain, because it comes as the kind and covenant ordering of Jesus. It is taken as belonging to the divine programme of our personal salvation. This losing one's life for Christ's sake and the Gospel's—subjecting all pride of opinion, and all high ambitions of the reason to the mind and will of God in the Scripture, counting it the highest reason to believe and trust in what God has revealed—counting all rationalistic self-assertion as most unreasonable against God's written word—and carrying this into the whole walk and work of life,—going just when and just whither he commands,—not stopping to make reply, nor to ask the reason why,—this is the supreme blessedness of life. The uninitiated revolt at it, as a humiliating self-abnegation, unworthy of a man. But Jesus will have us thus lose self to find salvation,—where it is only losing self in him, to have the life hid with him in God, as jewels are hid in a casket—or as a babe is hid in the folded arms of its mother. All the sweet counsels of bosom friends, on whom we are wont to lean in our perplexities, are summed up and sanctified in this gracious counselling and care of Jesus. This makes the world's awful desolations impossible to such, and the covenant promise is every day fulfilled, "None of them that trust in him shall be desolate."

Jesus preaches *rest*, and he *provides* rest to the soul. And rest itself is life itself. You shall save your life by trusting it to his keeping—by losing it in him. Here indeed occurs that blessed experience, that in this emptying of one's self for Christ—this losing of one's self in Christ—there is a blessed losing of what is evil—a losing of one's cares by casting them upon Christ—a losing of one's sins by laying them upon Christ—a losing of one's burdens of every kind, both temporal and spiritual, by rolling them upon Christ—so that it is a happy loss for a mighty gain. And as the worm loses its crawling nature, to take on itself the wings of the butterfly,—so in such self-losing, we are only pluming ourselves for the skies. To lose one's life for the Gospel is the true secret of saving it.

The divine signature of the work of Christ, more than his miracles even, was his preaching the Gospel to the poor—to the laborer—to the outcast—to the distressed. This was his answer to inquirers and doubters—wrought out and demonstrated in their presence. And this is the glory of the Gospel, that it is a *good word to the poor*—the poor in purse, as well as the poor in spirit. And this is the reflective glory of the Christian *work* everywhere, that it stretches out the hand of beneficence to the needy, on the great, high principle, that it is a blessing bestowed upon Jesus himself, in blessing his own poor. Heathen religions and philosophies had nothing for this class. The Jews also derided them. "This people"—this rab-

ble (they said), "*that know not the law* are accursed." But to feed the hungry—to clothe the naked—to enlighten the ignorant—to aid the struggling and weak; this is the mission of the Gospel. This is where the good news and glad tidings *come in.*

It was the glory of Athens, that she alone had reared a solitary altar to *pity.* But Jesus rears an altar to pity in every Christian breast. And then instead of the coliseum and the amphitheatre, where the slave was cast into the arena to fight with the beasts, there rose the hospital, the orphanage, and the sanctuary of Christian worship. And to bless the poor with Christian charities, and especially to sustain the ordinances for poor churches, even at personal sacrifice; this is in so far losing one's life for Christ's sake and the Gospel's, and this is *finding* one's life—finding the grand, high object of living—man's chief end—finding the true luxury of living—to win souls to Christ.

"Sure they of many blessings
Should scatter blessings round,
As laden boughs in autumn fling
Their ripe fruit to the ground.

"And the best love man can offer
To the God of love, be sure,
Is kindness to his little ones
And bounty to his poor."

And then, further, as regards the meed of human praise, which men so relish, and for which they labor, as an object of life. It is the difference between being esteemed for one's person and dress—

for one's estate and equipage—*or* for one's noble qualities of soul,—esteemed for the ability to command indulgences, *or* esteemed for the generosity and charity of a large beneficence, that carries indulgences to others. What public honor is there among men, like that which brings the poor, crowding with tears around one's coffin—and the Sabbath-school children, strewing flowers upon one's grave? Nay, what is it even to be laid in the poet's corner in Westminster Abbey, as having wondrously portrayed human character in the common walks of life,—as having made one's pen speak in sympathy with the neglected masses? How infinitely is all this beneath the actual Christ-like work of lifting up the masses by Christian charities, and by self-denying services, such as thrill through the very body of Christ in his feeling for the poorest members.

A Christian may easily be defined. There needs no controversy on so plain a point. He is not a Christian who merely paints Christianity on a canvas, in her figure of relieving the distressed, and ministering to the downtrodden and abused. *No!* that is the artist's work, who may paint with magic colors an ideal most unlike himself. The Christian is he who sits for that original, who is himself the model of that form—the prototype of that image. And he finds his life, where such a mere artistic limner of it would put the shadow for the substance, and would say he lost his life in seeking to devote it to Christ and his Gospel.

But this is the charmed word—losing one's life

for Christ. Yet this is just where men shrink back, and will not readily venture on any such experiment,—can not understand how *loss* can ever be *gain*,—how self-denial can ever be satisfaction and success. A man says, "I will do what I can for the cause." He means—"What I can," without inconvenience. He says, I am NOT ABLE to give to this or that object. He means, not able without some privation or self-sacrifice—without the denial of some indulgence—either promised or enjoyed—without in so far losing his life—losing some of his life's common pleasures—forgetting how the uncommon and superior pleasures of a higher life may come by this very means—may come in at this very opening—forgetting how the vessel must be emptied of rubbish in order to be filled with treasure—emptied of self in order to be filled with all the fulness of God. Nay, it is not to be concealed nor evaded, that the highest aim of human life is, in this sense, to lose one's life—to set one's self deliberately and earnestly to a life of self-emptying—self-denial—self-sacrifice for Christ and the Gospel, abjuring all that pampers pride, and panders to mere worldly indulgence, when by the true self-renouncement, Christ's cause may be best subserved! It is just the ever present question—the constant, persistent application in all the charities of the church—in all the offices of beneficence—in the thousand appliances of Christian work—this is it—a distinct, undisguised proposition to a man to LOSE his life, in order to find it.

Some fruit-trees must be lopped off at the top in

order to a better bearing—the vine must be pruned so as to produce much fruit. Nay, even some clusters must be stripped off, for the better maturing of the rest. A ship's cargo, even her treasure, must sometimes be cast overboard to get to land. *Conquest* is by *conflict*. Reigning is by suffering, as its necessary and fixed condition. Even in Christ's kingdom, this is the proposition: "If we suffer with him, we shall also reign with him." It is the cross in order to the crown.

But further than all this, the text is not merely a statement. It is also, and mainly, a COVENANT. It is not merely the working of a natural law, by which we must first lose a thing, before we find it. It is the working of a higher law, by which Christ covenants to more than compensate every loss incurred in his service. "Even the cup of cold water, given to a disciple in his name, shall not lose its reward." It is a definite and fixed *promise*. "And he said unto them, verily I say unto you, There is no man that hath left house, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my sake and the Gospel's, but he shall receive an *hundred-fold*, now in this time, houses, and brethren, and sisters, and children, and lands with persecution, and in the world to come, ETERNAL LIFE." This is God's grand guarantee. Prove ye, whether it be not true—true in every item of it. I beseech you, my brethren, make proof of this contract. It is a plain, business transaction. It is a fair calculation of outlay and return. Let no man dare to qualify the language, or to spirit it away by mere

*spiritualities.* The phrase is, "an hundred-fold, now in this time, houses and lands."

Do you believe it—that the investment is *commercially* good—that whatever is given to God in good faith comes back with large interest in this life? God is able to pay. He has all resources at his disposal. He controls your daily trade—your daily table. He can surely make his service remunerative. And he has given his obligations in writing, sealed with royal, double seals. And why should he not make them good? As Luther said in an hour of anxiety, pointing to a bird on a bending branch, where he had perched, singing, "Happy fellow—he leaves God to think for him."

I have known men of the world, who had made trial of giving to the cause of Christ, for return in kind, and who believed that they never gave a dollar but it came back to them, with a large increase, better than the banks. And is the Christian to hold back and doubt the master's ability, or his fidelity? *An hundred-fold, now in this life.* What? Not any one hundred per cent—two dollars for one! No! But one hundred-fold. One hundred dollars for one. Do you believe it? It is by a higher and truer calculation than your best experts or actuaries can make.

And then under God's covenant, you must take account of *exemption from losses which might otherwise* have come, as well as of actual accumulation; and who knows, how in God's reckoning, the large total is thus made up, without abatement, according to the largest terms of the promise.

And there is a positive increase of values, where there is an increase of ability, to enjoy one's goods. The gift of an appetite is more than the gift of a sumptuous meal without it.

Count the *interest*, then, along with the principal. The disheartened prophet under the juniper-tree said, "Let me die. It is enough. Now, O Lord take away my life!" What are palaces, and banquets, and jewels, and equipage to a sick soul—to one whose spirits are dried up? But God lifts the veil—takes away the pall from the prospect—gives to life a new relish and zest. And this is houses, and lands, and brothers, and sisters, all in one! And all this is now in this life. If you know nothing of this, it is because you have not tried it. And what then of the hereafter? "In the world to come eternal life!" Here all human calculation is baffled. Take the life of an angel—of a seraph flaming with the love of God. But more than this is the bliss of a redeemed soul.

I see men everywhere around me, losing their lives—yet not for Christ's sake, and the Gospel's—but for passing indulgences and for vain ambitions. I see them losing life in a mistaken effort to *find* it, but finding nothing but drudgery, and disappointment, and grief, and loss,—finding death instead of life, and finding out the miserable, mocking delusion, when it is too late—when they have lost their higher life to gain the lower one—lost the future life to gain the present one—lost the eternal life to gain the temporal one—and have lost both lives—lost the soul and lost the body.

I set before you, as the surest calculation in all the universe this proposition of Jesus Christ himself—*Author* of Life—source of life's blessedness—of him who is the way, and the truth, and the life—that you shall find out life's highest uses, life's purest pleasures—life's most lasting riches and rewards, if only you will lose yourselves in him—as a wife loses herself in her husband—as a friend loses himself in a bosom friend. If only you will lose sight of self in his sweet service—if only you will let go the lower, lesser life for the higher, greater life—you shall ever find all life's common joys sweetened to you—all life's common natural ties strengthened and endeared to you. You shall find out the secret of happy living, which you were seeking for, in other and false pursuits. And you shall find that the life of a man, when it is elevated by such divine aims as Jesus Christ proposes, becomes a life hid with Christ in God,—becomes the *life of God himself in the soul of man.*

## III.

## LIMITATIONS OF THE DIVINE WORKING.

"And he could there do no mighty work, save that he laid his hands upon a few sick folk, and healed them."—MARK vi. 5.

God himself *is law* itself. And he can not work except in deference to law, as embodying the most solid and fixed principles of action. Law is not God—but only the proof of a lawgiver, who is God. As we understand it, law is only the uniform working of force and power, whether in natural or in spiritual things, as that law is deduced from our observation and experience in manifold instances. And when we speak of miracles, men commonly regard them as either *violations* of law, or *suspensions* of law, while in truth they are only *exceptional workings*, which are equally within the sphere of law, only of higher law, transcending all ordinary phenomena. In a most important sense, the grace of God is *omnipotent*. Yet not so, be sure, as to be irrespective of all fixed principles of working. "He is able to save unto the uttermost." But observe, it is "all that come unto God by him." He is not willing that any should perish. No! But that all should come unto repentance.

For the man that cometh not to repentance, must go on to condemnation and perdition.

Look out in nature. The sun and rain are *not able*, even in their timeliest and most genial operation, to bring any verdure out of the *rock*. And yet this is no defect in the quality of the sun, or the rain. It is only a necessary result, in such condition of things, according to constitutional law.

So also in the domain of *grace*, as set forth in the text. There is a certain necessary limitation of the divine working. God bows to the eternal fitness of things. He is himself controlled by the law of his supreme love and faithfulness. The divine omnipotence, in gracious operation, is conditioned by the advertised plan, as regards the subject, or the sphere, or the circumstances, in any *particular case*. And yet, this is no essential qualification of the fact that God is *omnipotent*, or that, in the theological sense, the divine grace is *irresistible*. God's plan of grace can not be thwarted by the creature. "He will have mercy on whom he will have mercy." But there is a *plan*. He will have mercy on whosoever will. And according to this plan, God is pleased to work, and so to limit his operations. "God *so* loved the world." How much and how? That he gave his only begotten Son. But only with a *plan*, and for a definite end—that whosoever believeth on him (and none other), might not perish (as otherwise he must) but have eternal life.

Plainly, there are certain things in morals, which it is impossible for God to do. It is impossible for

God to *lie*. And why is it impossible? Simply because he can not be false to himself, or false to any creature or interest in the universe. And hence, it is essentially inconsistent with the very nature of things, and contradictory to the very idea of God.

In the passage before us it is written, that in a certain place, and in certain circumstances recorded, Jesus Christ could do no mighty work—with the very partial exception that is named. It is an actual inability that is spoken of. It is recorded here as impossible in the circumstances. Is his grace then limited by creature conditions? Let us see. The limiting cause in the case before us was the unbelief of the people. Nothing else. This was his own people. It was his own country and city of Nazareth. It was amongst his own neighbors, and kinsfolk, and acquaintance. And you have it written here precisely how the matter worked. He had been known by his townsmen in his boyhood. His family was well known. His trade, his brothers and sisters and mother—all—they knew them all. And they reasoned about him thus: "Is not this the carpenter—the son of Mary, the brother of James—a man of our community. We know all about him—his antecedents, origin, training, occupation, family, condition in life and daily business. Whence then hath this man this wisdom and these mighty works reported of him?" These were the workings of their minds. It was from the natural view of the case. And this was the bar to their faith. Looking upon him

*thus*, in the mere *human* aspect—they COULD not believe. And not believing in him, they *could not be* saved.

But you say, it is the divine prerogative to give faith. So it is. But faith is not a *substance*, which God could give a man, as you could give a man bread or water. No! It is a mental condition and quality of thought and of heart, which can be given only in consonance with the laws of mind, and in keeping with the constitution of the soul. Faith was never given, as a solitary and independent gift, apart from its necessary conditions and concomitants. There must be mental states, foregoing convictions and affections accompanying. And though faith is the gift of God, it is such a gift as is effectually *barred* by all the conditions of persistent and cherished unbelief. Therefore, *faith*, as a grace, does not spring up alone, as if it could be communicated by itself, and independently of other graces. It is simply a quality of the divine life in the soul. It can not co-exist with such prejudices against Christ's person and work as belonged to those Nazarenes. It is founded on truth, and it must have its corresponding convictions. It relates to a person, and it must have its corresponding affections.

The blessed Spirit of God, the sole agent in regeneration, however supernatural, works naturally, not unnaturally. He goes so far towards giving you faith, every one of you, that he has given you the wonderful record, abundantly attested, to be implicitly believed. And the wonderful

person and life to be fully trusted. And all that is lacking, is just the sincere disposition to accept the truth, thus amply set before you. And God can not make you believe against your convictions, nor against your will. So Jesus says to some of his hearers, "*How can ye* believe, who receive honor one of another, and seek not the honor that cometh from God only?" How can ye possibly do it? There are necessary conditions of believing. And a man, in the rush of pride, ambition, and self-seeking, can not be a believer. "The natural man discerneth not the things of the Spirit of God, neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." Therefore, while it belongs to God to give faith, he can not give it arbitrarily, and abstractly, and apart from all constitutional law. No man can expect it, much less insist on it as the gift of God, when he is moving habitually, in another and contrary sphere of thought, and feeling, and action, using no means, cherishing no kindred influences. For God can not contravene all the laws of mind. This would be to deny himself. He works within the sphere of mental and moral law. And though his grace has no conditions—as if it were to be bargained for—yet there are the necessary conditions for the operation of the grace—the conditions of things in which the grace operates, and which is essential to its operation. So it is said, "He came unto his own, and his own received him not." And so, using a natural illustration, it is said, "The light shineth in darkness, and the darkness compre-

hended it not"—did not take it in. Just as when a dark cloud is so thick, as to be impenetrable by the rays of the sun. We understand that. It is no sudden defect of the sun's power. Only *that* is not the condition of things in which the sun's power can be felt.

Let us apply these principles to the operations of divine grace, and inquire what are the necessary limitations of the gracious working in any case or community. There was the large majority of instances at Nazareth, in which Jesus Christ COULD NOT, was not able, it is said, to do any mighty work of healing and salvation, with only a few rare exceptions. Our inquiry relates, first, to the case of the man himself, and second, to the case of those who are seeking the man's salvation. As to the individual case, *unbelief* is the effective bar and limitation of the divine working. Take it as regards the work of *healing*, when Christ was upon earth, This illustrates the great salvation in all time. The principles are the same for the soul as for the body.

First, we are to understand that Christ's chosen work is to cure and to save—and that this is *the uniform operation* and result of the means of grace, *unless we* interpose the unbelieving hindrances. Commonly we think of the grace as sitting in state, arbitrarily waiting to be pleaded with and persuaded—like imperial power, that is indifferent to its subjects, and only, peradventure, attentive to their petitions. But not so. On the contrary, Jesus Christ is out upon his work of healing, travers-

ing the world, seeking and saving the lost. *Cures* are his element—his proper motions. They flow from him as his living breath—as water from a fountain—as light from the sun—as life from the Godhead. They are the natural radiations of his love, save where we interpose the unbelieving obstructions. For a fountain can be wilfully choked, in this or that passage, and the sun's rays can be shut out from one's eyes or from his windows. The sun shines for all, but not so as to reach the man who hides away in a garret or in a cellar, and will not be beholden to its beams.

See how that woman that came away from all the world's physicians, in sheer despair, to Jesus, got somehow this living thought into her soul. It flashed down into her dark, desponding bosom, and therewith all her energies were roused to action. She thought within herself—ah, this is the turning point in her life—she thought within herself, "If I may but touch the hem of his garment, I shall be made whole." She came to think of him, as of a galvanic *jar*, surcharged with all the electricity of love and healing—so that even the *touch* of even the *hem* of his garment would give her the cure. If *we* could so estimate it, that in him all fulness dwells—all the fulness of the Godhead *bodily* and all for us—then we should see the truth in something of its proper light, as reflecting on ourselves the fearful responsibility we incur of our own perdition.

So the prodigal one day came to himself! "These rags—these husks—these swine." Let no man say,

that his own case is too bad or too far gone now for a cure. Such limitation of Christ's power as we find in the text is not a weakness. It is only an indication of strength. God is restricted, not by any stint or failure of his resources. No. But only by the lack of the proper sphere for his operations in any case.

If you go with a broken limb to an oculist, you are not in the way of healing. His power does not operate in this direction. All he wants is to have the proper applicants for the cure he has to give. God's self-limitation therefore is all in perfect consistency with his omnipotence, which only conditions itself in wisdom and righteousness and faithfulness and love. God will be true—true to himself—true to the sinner—true to the Gospel scheme as revealed to men—true to the universe. The sun must have an atmosphere to work in, or he can not shine. The most powerful light will go out amidst the mephitic damps of a well or a mine. The prophet says to Israel, "Behold, the Lord's hand is not shortened that it can not save; neither his ear heavy, that it can not *hear;* BUT *your iniquities* have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear." The hindrance does not lie in God's sovereignty. No! Nor in God's absolute decree. No! Nor in any unwillingness of God to save. No! Nor in any lack of provision in any possible case. No. No. It lies simply and only in your *unbelief.*

Of what avail would it be to you, if a draft for

a thousand pounds were put into your hand, to your order, if you thought it a fraud, or a mistake, for some other man, or for yourself only upon some impossible condition; and for this, or any reason, you would not endorse your name upon it, or draw the money at the bank? You can not give a man the most precious gift, if he will not take it.

And, second, *This unbelief is the sole and certain barrier to the divine grace*, BECAUSE the faith required is only the necessary instrument by which we receive the blessing. Nothing more is required of us than heartily to accept the gift. Nothing less is compatible with our receiving and enjoying the blessing. You think of the faith being requisite, as a positive, pre-eminent grace, and the grace, you say, you can not furnish. And the grace of faith in possession and exercise supposes the salvation to be already achieved. This is the confusion of ideas. Just here, the problem is tangled to the common view. But the faith is requisite, only by a necessary law of the mental and moral constitution. Faith in a father's promise is necessary to any enjoyment of the promises. But you do not go into a diagnosis of your mental or moral state, and ask yourself if you have the grace of faith in your father. No. You do not puzzle yourself with such an analysis of faith as a grace or quality prerequisite. No! You want only to be sure of your father's word! In the case of those Nazarenes; how should any of their invalids be cured by him if they came not to him for the heal-

ing—if they derided his claims, and disbelieved his teachings? It is written of others—of those at Jerusalem—"That the blind and the lame came to him in the temple, and he *healed them all.*" "As many as *touched the hem* of his garment, were made whole." But here they did not come to him. And *this* simply because they did not believe in him, and would not be beholden to his grace. It was not the mere local absence that prevented the cure. He could have cured them at a distance by a word, by a will. This he did at times when the faith was exercised. But it was the indifference, and the disobedience—it was the suspicion, and the alienation—it was the incredulity and *malignity*, that put them out of the sphere of the gracious operation. It is not the faith, as a matured, ripened grace, that is prerequisite to the cure. It is just the receptivity and susceptibility, that lays itself open to the cure, and invites it, which is, in the very nature of things, requisite. The simple believing is, of course, necessary and indispensable to the receiving.

A steamer is at the wharf, waiting for passengers. The knowledge and faith are necessary, which will lead a man to go on board. And this is necessary, not as any meritorious quality in the passenger, not as any grace of faith, but only as a necessity in the nature of the case. His going aboard does not pay his fare. No! But he must go aboard, or be left behind.

And further—this divine law of gracious operation will be illustrated by the exceptional *in-*

*stances* here mentioned. "He could not do there any mighty work, *save* that he laid his hands upon a few sick folk and healed them." These few sick folk—how did they obtain the healing as an exception to the general rule among the Nazarenes? These were doubtless such as, in their sickness, felt the need of his cure, and sought it in their hearts —and either sought him out, or if they could not do this, and could not put themselves in his way, were brought to his notice by friends who believed, or *were sought out* by him for the healing, which they most of all things desired. This state of mind—this readiness to receive the blessing—this earnest desire after it—this measure of faith in him, that would invite it, and accept it thankfully, if it were known, and within reach—this is what everywhere he required, and this was all. "*Wilt thou* be made whole?" Wilt thou? "Believest thou that I am able to do this?"

So it is (in every community), the few sick folk upon whom he lays his hands and heals them—they are the exceptions to the general rule. Oh! why so few healed, when so many are sick—only that they do not count themselves sick, or because of obstructions interposed by themselves—not for any lack of divine willingness to save—but only for lack of their willingness to be saved. They are, in their own estimation, whole, and do not need a physician—or, they are doubters, and disbelievers, quibbling about questions which do not concern their vital necessity—and whilst they are arguing and disputing and cavilling about doctrines,

or duties, or means and methods, they perish. But these *few* sick folk have blessed the day they ever came to the knowledge of his grace. From off their cots of pain and disease—out of the depths of their misery, they rejoice in his great salvation.

And further, it is plain, that it is not any matured and perfected faith that is requisite, but only such a measure of it, as brings one within the sphere of his working, and makes the saving contact possible. The fountain is gushing with its healing waters. But these gushing, healing waters are nothing to the man who will not try their virtue, and will have none of them for a cure. They may flow on forever, like Niagara, and he will be unhealed by them. The man may be thirsting to death, and yet keeping at his distance for some prejudice or mistake he will get no slaking of his thirst. Therefore the call is, "Come ye to the waters." And faith, that is only as yet very partially enlightened, and very weak, and very distrustful—if only it bring the sinner to Christ for a cure—meets the demand, and makes the salvation sure.

The woman who touched him in the crowd thought that she might carry off the healing virtue unbeknown to others and even to him—thought that she might have the healing all to herself—quite a secret—and hidden from the rest. This was her first low view of the situation. She was ashamed of her disease—could not bear to speak of it—nor bear to have it noticed in the crowd, before the congregation; just as men and women

are ashamed to own themselves sinners, and penitents, and to be humiliated before Christ, or to confess him before men. All that had well nigh proved a fatal barrier to her in the way of the grace. But she despaired of other helps. She came at the impulse of her strong conviction. She ventured on the touch. She came into the necessary contact with him, even by the garment fringe. And Christ brought her out, and led her into the proper development of a believing spirit, in a believing life. And to her infinite joy she was healed, despite all the defects of her faith, and she felt the conscious healing course through all her frame.

Look at the twelve themselves. On the Sea of Galilee, with Christ in the vessel—when the storm came up and the elemental war threatened to wreck their boat and their faith together—when they can not trust themselves with him in the same vessel, will he let them go down as the just rebuke and punishment of their unbelief? No! Does he curse them to their face? Does he even *threaten* them? No! For he recognizes the faith in the germ and he fosters it. With what infinite tenderness and forbearance he says, "Why are ye so fearful, O ye of little faith?"

I am often asked—why God does not save all men, seeing he is able to save all? The Scripture answers, "Jesus is able to save unto the uttermost, all that come unto God by him." We may fairly say, God *does* save all whom he is able to save consistently with his plan of redemption. And this

plan is part of the constitutional law of the universe, by which he can save only such as believe. Some men claim to hope in a universal salvation. But there is no other salvation than this of Christ in the Gospel, and it is as universal as the case will admit. It is for *all who will.* What can be more free? And how can it be for those who *will not?*

Examine the law of operation, second, as regards those who are seeking the salvation of others. That Nazareth had been greatly honored and blessed as a community. The very fact which stood in the way of their faith was the glorious truth that Jesus had been reared among them, and that they knew him, and his household, all of them by name. And that very city, where he was one of themselves, was awfully hardened, and disbelieving, just by reason of their superior privileges. No wonder it is written, "He *marvelled* because of their unbelief."

It is often so—that the communities most distinguished for religious privilege—for having the church and the household of faith in their midst —are the most hardened against Christ himself. As though he had made himself cheap and commonplace by living among them — had become *a stranger* by being familiar, and so that a real stranger would have had more influence, and strange doctrines would carry the day. His wonderful works were an old story, and simply incredible to them, in the view of his well-known human relations. This is also the feature of *our age*—that it rejects Christ, simply because he has become so

familiar—rejects him as God, because he has become man—rejects his Gospel, because his church and worship and claims have become an *old story*. His people are known—his brothers and sisters—and they are criticised. Some fault is found, and readily enough, with one or other of them. The age will have something new and strange. Not one *home-born*, but a stranger will be accepted. Not Christ, but any antichrist, without half of his credentials and his attestations. Jesus Christ *marvels* at your unbelief. But every man's eternal future shall be according to his own free choice—"Whosoever *will*, let him take the water of life—freely." And whosoever *will not*, must take the opposite, and drink of the waters of death. So that Jesus does, in effect, say to every man, "Be it unto thee, even as thou wilt." For the future life is the fruit, of which this life is the bud and blossom. The longings show the belongings. It is according to one's path here, that he shall travel there. According to your affinities, dispositions, attractions and actions shall be your destiny hereafter. Even of Judas, it is said, he went to his *own place*. This state of the public mind is at this moment, a mighty barrier in the way of his doing his mighty works. All this parleying and arguing about Christ—this speculation as to who he is—this derision of him for his human origin and antecedents—this denial of his Divine Person and offices—all this, stands to-day in the way of the grace. For God will not work where there is no compatibility with the working.

And so again—where the community is overrun with worldliness, and there is no spiritual taste—no desire after God—and where the church itself is poisoned by the low marshy miasma of the world—there is no sphere for the gracious operation. The Spirit of God, instead of being cherished, is grieved—instead of being fostered is quenched—sacred things are trodden under foot in the rush after the world's vanities, and all the appliances of the Gospel are resisted! All the means of grace, that are put in operation, rebound, as from a wall of adamant. In the healing career of Jesus among the cities and villages of Palestine it is written, that they brought to him all that were diseased, and them that were possessed with devils, and he *cured* them. The church is an agency set up in the world for bringing the outcast and lost to the notice of this Jesus—and for bringing them in the arms of our faith to his feet. Some are converted, that they may labor for the conversion of others. And where this agency is lacking—where this instrumentality is at a stand-still—the history of gracious operation in any church or community is like that which is written here, "He did not many mighty works there, because of their unbelief."

God works in accordance with law. It is not, therefore, law that works, but God, who is the embodiment of law. It is a high personal agency. He will not work his mighty cures, where there is no demand for them—no belief in him, nor in his healing. He *can not do it*, in the very nature of things. There will be no revival of religion in the

gambling hall, or in the drinking saloon—no—nor where the community, and the church itself, is intoxicated with mirth or strife or gambling for gain. That is not the atmosphere where the Spirit dwells. He is grieved and quenched by such a condition of things. So Jesus can not work against all the opposing influences of unbelief, even in his own city,—among his own people. It is not in the nature of things *possible*. It would be as *impossible* as for God *to lie*, or *to deny himself*.

Look out and see the few sick folk healed, in comparison of the multitudes—a few among the thousands. My hearer! You complain that God does not save you. But you do not consider that you are virtually tying his hands, so that he can not do it—any more than he can lie, because he can not be false to himself. My brethren, here the whole problem resolves itself into an earnest, believing application and supplication for the blessing. Do not charge it upon God's sovereignty, I beseech you, or upon an inexorable decree against you. The decree of grace and salvation by Christ is here plainly *revealed* and published. If you want the blessing, take it—"Ask, and ye shall receive."

There is a heartless, faithless way of asking, that does not amount to seeking, and that never would go so far as the actual knocking to enter in. You may ask, and not come prepared to take the blessing that is offered—as a man may apply for something, which he is not ready to take home with him, for the reason that he has not expected to get it, or to get it *now*. You may not be prepared,

in your business affairs, or in your household, or in your worldly social engagements—for receiving the Holy Ghost into your heart, or into your household, *just now.* And God does not grant it to-day, with an understanding that you may take it to-morrow. No. The very readiness of God to give the blessing on the spot may be that which you are not prepared for, and which will always stand in the way of your receiving the blessing at all. You are never ready to take it just at once, and without any further delays—not ready to sit down with Christ to the passover table, just because you are well aware that there is some leaven, not yet searched for and cleared up and cast out of your house or your heart.

My hearers, I know not what barrier stands in the way of this divine grace with any of you to-day. But plainly, this is the record here, as there. "He could do no mighty works, save that he laid his hands upon a few sick folk, and healed them." But I am *instructed* to say, "It is not the pleasure of God that any of you, my hearers, should perish." If it were only your pleasure to be saved, and to come to him for salvation, then you would be saved. If it were even the pleasure of Christian friends—of God's praying people here, that these should be saved, and if so, they brought them to-day, in hearty concert, as those four friends brought the paralytic to Christ for a cure, I can not doubt that the cure would come.

But woe to the man or the household, that bars the incoming of the Holy Ghost! Better bar the gates

of the spring, and let no blade of grass or flower or blossom appear. Better bar the gates of the morning against the glorious sunrise. Better bar the door of your dwelling against your own father and mother, or against the best beloved of your soul. Better bar the chambers of your sense, and let the pall of death hang upon all your being, than to bar out the Sweet Spirit of God, Quickener, Teacher, Comforter, Renewer, Sanctifier, Saviour.

# IV.

## CHRIST—THE IDEAL MISSIONARY.

"Who went about doing good."—Acts x. 38.

Beyond the plain statements and predictions of the Scriptures, a vision was necessary to reveal to the church the great mystery of the ingathering of the outside world. And when Peter stands up the first time to publish the grand truth, and open the door to the Gentiles, he speaks of the Gospel message as embracing the glorious facts of Jesus' life, death, and resurrection. And in this statement he condenses the whole of this wonderful biography into these few words. The life of Jesus full of work—full of gracious deeds—full of saving acts—is well and truly expressed in this brief phrase, "He went about doing good."

The ingathering of the heathen is yet a mystery to the church—not something in its nature inscrutable, but something that needs divine revelation to make it known. It is a mystery, I say, even to the church. As though when it had been hid from ages, it had not at length been fully revealed by the advent of Christ and of the Holy Spirit. There is still a grave misconception of the mission and relation of the church to the outside world. Multi-

tudes around us stand very much in our eyes as the Gentiles stood to the Jews. We regard them a people to be pitied rather than to be gathered in. And we occupy our comfortable sanctuaries, as the chosen people of God, and think it enough that the outside world around us are not actually debarred; enough that the way is open to them; enough that the ancient ban of exclusion is taken off—not considering that ours is a mission to them of grace and salvation; not considering that the great work of the church is to gather them into the fold.

Peter's work was shown in the vision at Joppa to be positive and aggressive work. It was not merely a pictorial exhibition in which all the animals clean and unclean were seen to be herded together promiscuously and without distinction; but there came forth the commandment along with the exhibition, "Rise, Peter, kill and eat!" If he revolted, if his ancient prejudices of race and privilege demurred at this mixing with the unclean, and at this abolishing of old distinction between classes and races of people, the word came back to him,—a conclusive word, "What *God* hath cleansed that call not *thou* common."

It would seem as if the Jewish prejudice of exclusiveness and church privilege and prerogative were clinging yet to our minds, and that yet another vision would be necessary to make plain to us our duty to go forth in our mission of evangelizing the outside masses. "The mystery hid from ages and made known in Jesus Christ" has yet to be reopened to the Christian church. It

was nobly exemplified in the life of Jesus Christ himself. The grand duty of the church is like the Divine Master to go about doing good.

Look at this simple phrase as the definition and description of Jesus' life. Strange enough that there are two opposite characters representing the spirit world, who are described in the Scripture as going about among men: the one walking about as a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour; and the other, this Jesus, going about doing good.

Through Galilee and through Judea this was it; one aim, one ambition, nothing else. He was not at the wedding at Cana simply to be entertained as a guest; much less to indulge even an innocent recreation from his pressing cares and business; least of all, to vindicate his social claims, or to keep up his social position and that of his disciples, with the families of the town. No! his hour was coming to do a grand work of providing for the family and for the guests, and thus to signify his willingness to work wonders for our refreshment and satisfaction, for body and soul forever.

And where was he anywhere in any such relation or condition as to throw any doubt upon his work of helping, healing, comforting, saving? Where was he ever seen in any attitude or connection to cast a shadow upon the glory of such a life? When could any one have ever suspected that he had any private aims to subserve or any sinister, selfish objects to accomplish? Nay! all those accusations and mean insinuations of his being a man gluttonous and a winebibber, or of

his wishing to make himself a king, and of his aiming to overthrow the nation, were only the fabrications of their envy and jealousy; only the assaults of sheer malice to get up some popular outcry against him. No man of them who knew him at all was ever honest in any such charge against him. Never! You could see his life everywhere disproving this whole batch of slanders. He and his disciples stood ready to point to those wonderful works as the patent overpowering answer to such shamefaced invective.

What town or city or village of Galilee and Judea and Samaria even, was not made glad by his healing mercy? There was Capernaum and Bethsaida and Nain and Nazareth and Samaria and Sychem and Bethany and Bethlehem and Jericho and Jerusalem. And there were the outside coasts of Tyre and Sidon. He was never resting, never intermitting his work. In the house of friend and stranger; by the road-side; in the temple and at the pool where invalids resorted; on the sea, on the shore; by day, by night; Sabbaths and week-days —busy, busy, busy; always at work—curing lepers, healing blind and deaf and lame; casting out devils, rebuking fevers, raising the dead. He took his sleep on the boat, upon the passage—the only sleep of his we read of; agonized while his disciples slept in Gethsemane; talked with Moses and Elias while his disciples were overpowered with sleep on the Transfiguration Mount. Read the brief accounts of his work: "There came great multitudes unto him *and he healed them all.*" "As

many as touched the hem of his garment were made whole." "He healed all manner of sickness and all manner of disease, among the people." And here in the text. "He went about doing good and healing all them that were possessed with the devil." The busiest man that the world ever saw was this Jesus.

And, secondly, this religion of Jesus Christ is precisely adapted to the masses. It carries upon its very front an invitation to the laboring classes: "Come unto me all ye that labor."

We have missed the sense of this when we have over-spiritualized it; when we have explained it wholly of the inward soul-troubles of men. And then, at once, men have been prone to understand it of a spiritual quality or condition prerequisite and meritorious. And in the absence of this state of mind and heart they have thought there was no hope for them. But no! Its voice is to all who toil and worry and sweat under the curse—that immense majority of men—the workmen and laborers of every kind, whose cry is for rest in all their weariness and worn condition; to whom his own Sabbaths ought to come as a special joy. And then the masses—the outside multitudes—these are yet at our doors, under the shadow of our sanctuaries.

And this Gospel is precisely for them. It is for the poor. Under this economy of Christ it is presumed that the poor have the Gospel preached to them. "The poor," he says, "ye have always with you." And this religion is suited to such wants

and woes as poverty brings. While the poor are standing aside and looking upon the sanctuary as only for those in easy circumstances; while they hold themselves to be debarred by the usages of Christian society; repelling the poor by failing to invite them and by failing to notice them when they come, as if it was no part of a Christian's calling to consort with sinners of the Gentiles;—all this while, this very Gospel that we preach is specially addressed to these classes who are so largely absent; who are thus virtually excluded. And the full Gospel is best preached to such, and can not be effectively preached nor successfully preached where such are not found in the congregation. Where in the sermon on the mount it is once said, "Blessed are the poor in spirit," it is again said, "Blessed be ye poor, for yours is the kingdom of God."

And further, this Gospel is fitted for the offcast. When we see this Christianity go to the abject and degraded, we see it working in its proper sphere, doing its greatest wonders, and proving its divine origin, as in no other way.

We have our genteel congregations who come and go, who have their pews as they have their houses—all as their private property. And the whole aspect of the matter is, that the sanctuary is a sort of religious club-house, where persons inclined to religious things buy for themselves and for their families a place and a partnership in whatever is to be found here: building, preacher, music, society, all their own. Others, for the most

part, it is thought, are not expected, not wanted; and though such would not be put out nor frowned upon, but even welcomed, yet this is judged to be rather by constraint of Christian politeness than by any zeal to do them good.

But look, and see this Christianity where it goes out to the forlorn and wretched and offcast, and takes the Gospel to the humblest cot and kindly commends this Jesus to the sorrowing and degraded and lost! You see it put gladness into the darkest garret; into the foulest, vilest pit, or den of iniquity. And where it lifts up the most abandoned of our race and imparts to such a new nature, there it is that Christianity asserts its divine power. And there we see a proof of it such as no argument of books, neither miracles nor prophecies even, could give. It is the external and internal evidence together. It is therefore in the cities as the centres of population and of human interests, where life is teeming with busy energy in good and evil, and crowded with temptations and trials and vices; it is here where the masses congregate of various races and pursuits and principles, and where the throng is full of cross purposes and conflicts; it is here that this religion of Christ comes in and addresses itself equally to all. Here it ought to reap its grandest harvests, and here it ought to gather its most splendid trophies. So it is said, "Jesus began to teach and preach in *their cities.*"

All the squalor of the hovel, all the revel and riot of the dramshop, all the vile, profane, brutish

degradation of the promiscuous crowd, where every vestige of self-respect is long ago lost and nothing is left but base indulgence—all this is to be reached and lighted up and cheered and blessed with this religion of Christ. No other power in the universe can do it! And where this Gospel goes out on its path of conquest it subjugates the stoutest rebellion, elevates the most abject condition, and wins over the most alien and hostile disposition to Christ. This is seen wherever it is fairly tried.

Why then is not this grand remedy for fallen humanity put in utmost use? Why is the Gospel provision stored in the churches as in bonded warehouses and not brought out and distributed among the multitudes? Is it enough that Christians furnish the church accommodation? But they have not even done that. Must careless men be left to build themselves churches and to sustain the ministry of themselves, on the principle that if they want them they will have them? What if those who need them most, want them least? You had as well demand that the fish in the sea should make themselves a fishing-boat and net to take them in. And Christian ministers and Christian members are fishers of men.

And it is not enough to open the sanctuary doors, nor even the doors of your pews. You must go out seeking, inviting, urging them to come in. This we have not done. The net is not to be kept in the boat. It is to be cast out, and cast out in the deep and on the right side of the ship.

I take it that just here is the shameful neglect of our churches. And the ground of their great inefficiency is this: the Gospel that is made for the masses and meant for the masses, does not go to the masses, simply because the church membership does not go out among the masses with proper zeal and tact to gather them in.

First, then, I say the "going about" is to be done after the pattern of the Master. He did not sit in state in the Temple at Jerusalem and wait for the people to seek him out, else neither Zaccheus the rich man, nor Bartimeus the blind beggar, nor thousands of others, would have been reached. He went out seeking as well as saving the lost.

And here it is that pure religion finds its practical definition, in the church as well as in the Scripture, "Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father" is this. What is it? To visit—to visit. It is not as if a mere fashionable visiting could be meant, but to go about and find out the distressed, to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction; to go in search of the forlorn and careless and bring them into the churches.

I know the difficulties. You are disinclined to visiting, or you have a large circle of your own, or you are doubtful how you would be received by strangers on any religious errand, or you think it would be forwardness or presumption on your part, or you think of others who could do it better; and for one reason or another, the great majority of the church members excuse themselves

and scarcely charge their minds with any such duty.

Elisha the prophet went outside of Israel to the poor widow of Shunem. She was in great trouble. There was a hard-hearted creditor threatening her for his pay. She had nothing left in the house but her cruse of oil. And the prophet made that cruse of oil go so far that it filled all the vessels she could get from her neighbors, and lo! by means of his visit the poor widow was rich enough in oil to pay her debt. Christianity does this very thing; makes our little go so far. It increases our scanty supply; multiplies our few loaves to a livelihood.

What multitudes of our own city are living outside of our sanctuaries, little cared for or looked after; and what an account have we to render for these! The church is asleep to the astounding facts, and yet the very special province of the church is this aggressive work among the outside multitudes.

And the proper power of the church is seen in this very work of ingathering.

Some one was curious to know how Mr. Spurgeon was ever able to fill his immense tabernacle with a steady crowd of five or six thousand hearers. Naturally enough he was written to, to tell the great secret of filling the church. He answered, "My members fill the church, not I. It is by their bringing in others. It is their success not mine. They back me up," he says, "through the week they invite others to their pews, they seek

out new-comers, they bring in new church-goers." I asked him, how he ever succeeded in visiting his thirty-five hundred members. He said, "I don't visit them, except in actual necessities. My elders do the bulk of the visiting, and they inform me of the cases that require my personal attention." But then came the question, how his elders could command the time; and the only answer was, "They do it."

I ask now, would it not be a sweet relief from the constant rush and pressure of business cares to make a visit or two a day for the church and for Christ. There are difficulties, I grant it; but the cry is commonly, "I am too busy." Must God, then, spoil a man's business and break him up and set him high and dry with nothing to do in order to get from him some service for the church? The charge of Christ in the parable, "occupy till I come" means "Do business till I come." Is not this verily one's business? Is your own secular business, as you call it, to be put before the business of Christ? Must the church die out and the Gospel of Jesus Christ fail in a community, because the men, both officers and members, are too busy to give it attention?

Is there any fair reason why every sitting-place in every one of our sanctuaries should not be filled, except the people outside think they are not wanted in the sanctuary; that they will not be welcomed by the pew-holders, or will not be respected among the worshippers—who seem inclined to have it all to themselves? Meanwhile the thousands of

families stay away, and religion declines, and the blessed Gospel of Jesus Christ is charged with inefficiency. The merchant would issue his circulars and send out his travelling agents, if he saw his business falling off or his custom declining. Oh, yes! and every one knows this, and it is the testimony we have heard from a great worker in city missions, that the Sabbath congregations of mission chapels are just in proportion to the visits of the week; and it is commonly so in the churches. And if members are remiss in Christian sociabilities the church suffers, and the fault is simply that of carelessness, inactivity, sluggishness, or coldness in the life-currents of the body.

Some minister has lately said that so far as his experience goes, the church fails in the city from the absorption of the men in business, and from the absorption of the women in pleasure. It is not quite so in all cases. Dr. James Hamilton of London speaks of the heartless industries that so absorb attention. He means the mere mechanical. Women as well as men fail in church duties from over-attention to business. Martha is careful and troubled about routine work of the household, and Mary sits still in the house at Christ's feet. It is the charge of the household which, in some cases, seems to make it impossible to do any thing out of doors; but could not some time be rescued for this Christian work? Would not the incessant watch and worry of the housekeeping be relieved by stepping aside daily to look in upon others for Christ?

And then, too, much time and labor might be

saved for the church if the costly alabaster boxes of precious ointment were broken upon the head and feet of Jesus. The recourse is now to employ suitable men and women for visitors; and this, at least, the church could do. The missionary alternative is go or send; but no substitute can altogether release the principal from his or her appropriate work. And the members are better as volunteer visitors, than any who could be sent as employees—if only the members have a heart for their work.

And it is not merely going about; but it is going about *doing good* that is requisite. Offices of Christian kindness which bring a practical Christianity in contact with men, bring it to the bedside of the sick and to the hut and hovel of the destitute, and which penetrate even to the dark dens of iniquity, reaching out this salvation to the lost.

This is the Christianity that is needed to do the work of the church. Take the church to the thousands who will not come to the church, and so the church becomes filled and swarming with those who have had the practical proof of its value. It is easy to say, "Be ye warmed!" and "Be ye filled!" without opening the hand to supply the want. There are a thousand questions that are naturally raised in the mere matter of formal visiting, even where it is for the best Christian purposes; but where it is mixed with Christian beneficence—where a lively Christian sympathy goes along with the call, and a hearty desire to do

good is manifest, there goes the mighty power of Christian example and persuasion of a Christian life. Therefore the Christian visiting that is given as the first part of the inspired definition of true Christianity is joined with the most important practical requisite—for the visitor himself to keep himself unspotted from the world. A man's efforts to do good to others ought to be sustained by his own solid Christian character. May not this be a reason why so many hold back from any thing active and positive and aggressive in the church; that they are conscious themselves of inconsistencies and contradictions of character, and of being not unspotted.

Plain enough is it then, that what the church needs, to be an effective and successful agency for Christ in the world, is to go out into the world and not seclude itself; not shut itself up from contact and sympathy and communion with the outside multitude; but to circulate, to visit the needy and neglected and distressed, and to be in all its membership an example of purity and piety, diffusing the influence of a holy life, and evincing a heartiness in every good word and work. What if every family in the church should charge itself with the responsibility of always having another family under its care—to bring into the sanctuary and lead to Christ? This going about doing good can never be accomplished by staying in the house and living to one's self, careless of others' wants and ignorant of the necessities around.

You ask how you can do any thing. You think

only of working by societies or committees. You think of the great city and can not see how you are to reach the masses. Begin with your own family, your domestics and dependents, and your own neighborhood. You will not go far till you will find some one to be helped and led to Christ. Work for the Sabbath-school. Make an effort with the neglected boys on the streets to gather them in. Families are reached by this means. "To do good and to communicate forget not, for with such sacrifices God is well pleased." *Benevolence* is the popular word, but *beneficence* is the true word. We ought to have gotten past the mere *well-willing* and even *well-wishing* that falls short of *well-doing.* That is a failure. It is *beneficence* that is called for as the proper fruit of *benevolence*, and need I say, that such *beneficence* is a blessing to the doer himself. Just as the overflow of the fountain purges it; just as the giving of a light to another from your own lamp in the midnight doubles the light that shines around your own path.

And a city which cares nothing for evangelizing the masses, reaps an awful reward in the rampant vice, the corruption of public morals, the robbery, fraud and murder which infest the community, and make the city a hell on earth. And where the church is satisfied with elegant proprieties of worship, and is not hard at work reclaiming the masses to Christ, the plagues which God will visit on the city and the land will come up into our windows, and vice will threaten to break in at our doors, and it will require a miracle to

save us from the fiery judgment that comes raining down from heaven.

And an active church, a working church, a sociable church, is a successful church. It is the definition of true religion, therefore, because it is the definition of Jesus' life among men. "He went about doing good." And he lives most and best for Jesus, and he attains most surely to his glory and reward, of whom it may be said by the living at his death, and written by beholders, for his epitaph, "He went about doing good."

# V.

## THE LAW OF THE DIVINE MANIFESTATION.

"Judas saith unto him, not Iscariot, Lord, how is it that thou wilt manifest thyself unto us, and not unto the world? Jesus answered and said unto him, If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him."—JOHN xiv. 22–23.

There are laws in grace, as there are laws in nature. I love to think of this natural world, as so constructed as to symbolize and shadow forth the higher realm of grace. I love to think of our adorable Lord Jesus Christ as the Creator of this lower framework of material things, by which he would illustrate the higher department of spiritual things—using the earthly to exhibit the heavenly. So that when he came to his own, he made the rose and lily to speak, and the field and the vine to stand forth, as pictorial images of something belonging to the soul; and even making our common bodily sicknesses the avenue by which he reached our deeper spiritual wants.

God has been pleased to manifest himself in places devoted to his worship. To the fallen pair, though not in Eden, yet at the gate, he dwelt between the cherubim. At the altar of sacrifice he

displayed himself in response to the offering there. At the Tabernacle and in the Temple, he revealed himself in the Shekinah—the luminous cloud of the visible presence resting over the mercy-seat. And in the synagogue and in the Christian sanctuary he has appointed to be approached, and by signal manifestations all down the ages he has made the place of his feet glorious. Not now, as of old, confined to any exclusive seat, for gorgeous ceremonial and for a whole nation's assemblage. Not now preferring even the grand cathedral, amidst the lavishment of wealth and the embellishments of æsthetic offerings. But bound by great moral laws, operating everywhere the same, and equally on earth as in heaven—laws which reach down to the heart's depths, and which estimate the externals of worship only as they are the expressions of inward devotion. But not to all alike, in any worshipping assembly, does God manifest himself. The sun shines for all, yet not so as to reach and gladden those who hide themselves in garrets and cellars, or who bandage their eyes rather than be beholden to the light of day.

Here, in our text, a profound truth is touched, by this inquiry of Judas. And when it is notified, that this Judas is not the Judas Iscariot, but another and opposite Judas—a friend, and not a foe—the question has its highest significance from the contrast. "Lord, *how is it* that thou wilt manifest thyself unto us, and not unto the world?"

What is the *law* of the divine manifestation? Here is a mind, laboring with the deepest prob-

lems of Gospel grace, as they stand related to the divine sovereignty, and to the human volition and action. Here is a man, moved to the depths by the question, how it is that so large a proportion of his fellow-men have no conception of the Gospel, though living under its blaze. How is it? he asks. There are doubtless these two great classes of men in all the ages—the *discipleship*, and the *outside world!* And the case with these, respectively, as to the divine manifestation, is opposite, the one to the other. And the momentous question is here propounded to the Master himself—*How is it?* Is it a matter to be referred simply and only to the divine will, and the divine *decree* —as wholly *arbitrary* with God? Is it simply to say, that to one man God pleases to reveal himself, and not to another? Men so caricature the divine *fore-ordination*, which is everywhere taught in the Scripture, and which is essential to the very idea of God; and then with a partial and one-sided statement of the matter, they denounce the divine prerogative as a sheer outrage.

But there is a *human side* as well as a *divine* side of the matter, and the over-statement of either is a *misstatement*, and it is only the *half truth*, which becomes falsehood.

The divine *fore-ordination* is set forth in the Bible as a comfort to the people of God, and not anywhere as any discouragement to any other creature. They who love God are addressed and spoken of as elect before the foundation of the world, and it is an infinite comfort to such. Is it

any thing repulsive to the wife to be told by the husband that he had always loved her from the first sight of her in childhood? No.

But there is no man who is not freely invited to all the benefits of this election. And nothing is required of any man but his own election of these benefits, corresponding and responsive to the divine election of himself. *Pause* here, and listen to the profound and beautiful answer from the lips of Jesus himself—and SEE *how it is.* And if there be a creature under the whole heaven who can take exception to this law, as any severity of God, let him speak.

This divine manifestation to one man and not to another, is here referred in the text, *first of all, to the human taste and inclination.*

Jesus' answer to the question of how it is, is this; "*If a man love me*, he will keep my word."

Yes! *If* a man love me. And this everywhere, naturally and necessarily, conditions the whole case. Take any thing that is to be manifested. There is, for example, in our great city, the glorious picture of the Yosemite, or the "Heart of the Andes." It is on public exhibition. And the advertisement is blazoned in the public prints, and it is hung over the *door-way* of the hall, and it is even thrust out upon the path of the passer-by. It is on exhibition *free.* But what cares the rushing throng? "One to his farm, another to his merchandise!" Few pause, and enter in! It is matter of taste and inclination. The picture is there. It is there on free exhibition. Whosoever will, may come and

see. But only here and there does any one turn aside from his common business to enjoy the spectacle. "If a man *love painting.*" That is the point! If he have a taste for high art. If the glowing colors on the canvas have a power to reach his soul and to put him into delicious communion with nature—so as to ravish his sense and bring him into that sweet bondage to the high ideal—*if this be so—then* this is the inward condition that controls the result. This is the susceptibility that is wrought upon, and charmed, and captivated, and without which, that glowing canvas would be to the eye only as an *idle tale.*

Take a different man into the presence of that masterpiece. What is that to him? He has no taste for any such manifestation of nature's beauties, as wrought by the pencil of the artist, and he turns away to the gratification of lower passions, or to the dull, mechanical routine of his daily life.

In the personal matter of the text, the key to the situation is just the inward taste which decides the affinity. This is the divine statement. "If a man *love* me, he will keep my word."

And this the natural and necessary law of action. The word, written and preached, is the revelation of God in Scripture—as the personal word is the revelation of God in our nature. Each is, in its way, an incarnation. And the glory of the Scripture, wherein it is living and powerful, is that the God incarnate shines through the page, and gleams upon our view in all the living record.

To say then (as Jesus here says, in explaining his manifestation), "If a man love me, he will keep my *word*," is only to say, that the personal affinity will decide the action of the man, in making him attentive to the word of the one whom he loves—in making him cherish it, and follow it in his living.

And this word of Scripture is itself a medium of the divine manifestation. He looks here just as he puts his eye to the glass of the stereoscope, to find the picture in its rounded, lifelike proportions.

What, then, if the picture on exhibition be that of "Christ Healing the Sick," or of Raphael's "Dresden Madonna?" Then it is also a question of the *subject*. What is the man's taste, and how will it lead him? That Madonna, world-renowned, has a separate chamber in the great gallery at Dresden. Will you enter in and see it there? If a man love *Jesus*, he will gaze with a very special interest and rapture upon whatever reveals him, and even upon these triumphs of art, because they aim to delineate the glories of his Friend and Saviour. And for the same reason, and if he have this personal love, he will study the Scripture, and receive the messages of God's word in the sanctuary, and find himself in personal communion with the beloved object.

I have seen American travellers in the Holy Land, caring nothing for Bethlehem, and Nazareth, and Jerusalem, and longing to get back to the opera-houses and theatres in Paris and Milan, heeding not the footprints of Jesus, or the sacred

memorials and monuments of his life and death. You can see the same taste here around you and even amongst the Sabbath assembly.

So I have seen men, to whose eye all the grandeurs of the Yosemite were nothing at all; to whom that stupendous display of God's majesty and creative power was only a dull and toilsome sight—who would stop on the way to the Vernal Fall to fish in the stream, rather than go on to gaze at the beauties that God has so concentrated in that fall itself.

If you ask, then, *how it is* that Jesus will manifest himself to his disciples and not unto the world: if you will know the philosophy of this distinction in so momentous a matter, I protest, that you shall not charge it upon the mere sovereign decree of God, to display himself to one man rather than to another, as though there were no human side to the case. Come here to the plain matter of fact, and to the human aspect of it all, and see how it is determined by your own tastes and likings.

Moral beauty *can not* display itself to depraved tastes, so as to be appreciated. There can not be any *compulsion* of love. Your tastes are all worldly, and not at all spiritual and heavenly. Then you do not, in such inward condition, afford any susceptibility to the glories of Christ, however fully they may be revealed. It is the light shining in another sphere—or rather, it is the light shining in the darkness, and the darkness comprehending it not. No eye for that. Blind to that kind of beauty. The fish in the mammoth cave

have no eyes, because their habitat is darkness. It is simply in your breast, a cloud so thick, so impenetrable by the noonday sun, as that no impression is made upon it, any more than if the sun had never shone to gladden the earth with his beams. The colors in the most beautiful flowers are not essential and inherent qualities. They are only the rays of the common sunlight, which that flower absorbs by its own peculiar texture.

What now, should one complain, if, at the great Handel Festival, he should find no pleasure, simply because he had no taste for classic music, had not cared for it nor cultivated it? Or if he would not even look over the programme, and get the grand ideas of the oratorio—the "Messiah," or the "Creation"—and should feel no sympathy with the performance, because he could not enter at all into the music or the sentiment? Ask then, amongst the auditors, "How is it that *there* the great Handel manifests himself to some, and not to others?" If a man love the art and the subject, then it is all to him a splendid manifestation. But if he has a taste only for the song of the brothel, and for the low bacchanal, then we readily understand *how it is*, that in all that grand performance of such masterpieces, there is no manifestation to him.

That wonderful statue of the "Dead Christ," by Bernini, at Rome. You may go down into the crypt of St. John Lateran, and you shall see nothing. All is darkness. But if the guide go along with you, with his torch in hand, some will see, in the light of that manifestation, only the exquisite

marble form, almost transparent. But to the lover of Jesus, it is the form of his best friend, and *there*, as nowhere else in all the world, either in painting or in statuary, he can see the dead Christ in the arms of his mother! O, what a manifestation! But only in those conditions.

Look now at the holy scene where, in the sanctuary, Jesus especially manifests himself to the *church* as he does not to the *world*. It is the peculiar, chosen spot of divine manifestation. It is Gethsemane, Calvary, and the garden sepulchre of Arimathea, all together, in one blaze of splendid, glorious revelation. What a table! What a feast! How is it, that it is to only a portion, and a small portion of the public worshippers, that Jesus manifests himself there—that to *so many* it is nothing but the bits of bread, and the common cup—the humblest, most empty and unattractive of all earthly entertainments? And *how is it? how is it*, that to a few it is the most hallowed spot of heavenly friendships, where God and Christ come down to be guests of the poor sinner; and yet the table is the Lord's own, and without any parallel this side of heaven—grander and more glorious than any banquet of kings? How is it? *How?*

Look at the two Judases at the first Supper! One of them (the Iscariot) nursing in his heart the bloody thought of a traitor to his master, seeing in the Lord Jesus only a victim for his base designs; his depraved vision veiled to all his glories. And the other Judas (not Iscariot), clinging to his Lord with all the devotion of love, and be-

holding him in all his fond manifestations at the table. How is it? What can explain the phenomena—that make these men of the same circle, and of the same name, the veriest opposites? I tell you it is all a matter of taste! Judas Iscariot's judgment of the alabaster box betrays him as the thief *that he is.* And this inquiry of the other Judas discovers in him the yearning for the world's well-being, which proves his true discipleship.

Yes. I tell you it is all a matter of taste. And you have not the taste for any such manifestation, nor the appetite for any such feast of Christ! *Pity!* Pity. A thousand times, pity! If one have no taste for the good, no taste for the beautiful, no fondness for knowledge, no relish for the truth, no affinity for moral excellence, then he is, by this very constitution of things, ruled out of the sphere of all highest and purest enjoyments.

It is nothing arbitrary with God. No. It is no naked decree of divine election, without any responsive election, or corresponding choice in the human breast! *No!* For *love* is just that quality and exercise of soul that can not possibly admit of *compulsion.* And hence the law of the divine manifestation is perfectly natural and simple, and determined by the very necessity of things, and not a matter of mere *decrees* with which we have nothing to do. No! It is the same great law as governs every manifestation of moral excellence in all the universe—for angels, for devils, for time and for eternity. The law is fair and beautiful

and true and good. Do you ask again, How it is? Jesus gives the answer. "If a man love me, he will keep my words, and my Father will love him, and *we* will come unto him, and make our abode with him." Take if you please, the manifestation of God in nature—where the great questions come to view at the threshold of all created things. Is there a God—a personal Creator and Ruler of the universe? I ask, Is this a question of pure reason? *Nay*, but of the disposition also. The heart rebels against the creative claims. Men call for laws of nature, orders, processes, forces, inanimate and impersonal agencies—and make the universe mere machine work, without a machinist, so as to escape the personal responsibility to a personal intelligent cause. Jesus says, "If a man love me." Oh, yes! Then nothing is so beautiful as God in nature, and everywhere is seen his footprint, and everywhere is heard the hymning of his praise. But if a man love me not! Oh, then, nothing is so welcome as to displace God from his own universe, and to get rid of the very idea of God.

Take also, for example, the manifestation of *Jesus Christ as God.* Is this a thing of the reason alone, or even of revelation *alone?* No! But also a matter of the taste and disposition. The man who has in his soul no appreciation of the God-man—who has in his sense of need no necessity for a divine Saviour—*he* can not readily accredit him as divine, can not entertain the idea of his divinity, can not find any place for it in his sphere of thought, can

not receive and accept such a being in his personal relations. And the Unitarian Creed, as it was, and is, with the Jews, is the outgrowth of a self-righteousness or a self-expiation, that discards the great truth of a divine provision for men. If the necessity of our case be finite, and not infinite, then the Saviour and the salvation must be finite also.

But there is a further step in this law of the divine manifestation. The law is throughout a law of moral harmonies in advancing operation. It is the common and universal law of personal affinities in the actual progression. The man who inclines to God finds God inclined to him. It is infinitely mutual. The spring-tide sun draws out the violet from the sod, and so also the violet draws the sun, and receives his beams in beautiful manifestation of rainbow tints upon its bosom.

But note the law of progress here. Observe. This keeping of Christ's word, as published in the Scripture and in the sanctuary, is that condition of things *in which* the Father shows himself as infinitely loving to such, and in which he draws near to such, in expressions of personal love. This is the higher, closer manifestation that may be said to be naturally conditioned upon the former. Here occurs a fuller intimacy through the word—a personal communion through the written and inspired communication. Just as letters from a distant and beloved friend awaken all the tenderest sympathies, and draw out the inmost soul in response, and the affection comes to be aglow, and the friendship is cemented on both sides. *So*, such a

heart as is responsive to God's word of *revealed love* finds God exhibiting himself more and more in that love, and entering in more fully to the chambers of the soul as a guest. If a man love me, then it follows that he will keep my word as it is delivered to him; *then*, by the same law of manifestation, it *further* follows that the Father will love him. And *then*, as a crown and climax of the manifestation, the Father and Son together will *come* unto him, and make their abode with him.

The picture in the Revelation is of one standing at the door of the church, and knocking for admittance. And the natural and necessary condition in the case of every man is, that the inward *response* shall be the signal for entrance and friendship and fellowship, and there is, at length, the blessed banqueting there. "If any man hear my voice and open the door, I will come into him, and sup with him, and he with me." This is the clear delineation of the whole case. This is the full explanation of all the phenomena.

And further, this law of the divine manifestation involves principles, which apply as well to the negative as to the positive side, and as well in eternity as time. It is night now in other quarters of the globe, not because the sun is blotted out or exhausted. No. But simply because there the earth is turning her face away from the sun. So, also, it is the side of the moon which leans in her circuits towards the sun, which gets all the radiance which she reflects upon our planet, while the

other side must, by the same necessity, be pitchy darkness, and winter's cold! Does any one ask then, *How it is* that God allows in his universe any place of perdition? It is simply because men, who have perdition in them, can go nowhere else, by all the laws of moral gravitation—by all the affinities of moral being. Just as a stone sinks and a feather floats—by law. It is even a provision for a great necessity, and no arbitrary dictum of God. It can not be otherwise. In the constitution of moral nature, by the law which eternally regulates all moral destinies, it must be so! The sinner must go to his own place. No power in the universe could adapt heaven to the lost soul. Lost to all right conceptions of God—to all right views of truth, and to all holy principles of action—to all right tastes and affections—there is no atmosphere in heaven which such an one could breathe—no pleasure in heaven which such an one could relish or tolerate. Do you ask of Jesus again, *How is it* that thou wilt not manifest thyself unto the world?

Has the question in your mind ever taken the shape of the profane inquiry, *How is it* that God can be *so cruel* as to send any man to an eternal perdition? Then, I say, there is no cruelty on God's part, but only a high and absolute necessity that must determine the manifestation on both sides. And as heaven consists in God's manifestation of his glories to those who love him, and it is all blessedness and rapture to them; so whose fault is it, if to those who hate him, he turns his

back, or if turning their back on him, that very manifestation of himself which makes a heaven to the good, makes a hell to the wicked, simply by their own adverse position?

Look at Judas Iscariot. He was simply a fully developed sinner, lost amidst the highest exhibitions of Christ's love, and lost to all that is lovely and good in the universe. Where must *he* go? Where in all the realm of God's government? Where? Only to his own place—where every thing is akin to him, where his boon companions are, where he naturally and necessarily belongs. No power of all the angels, as they reap the harvest of the world, could thrust the humblest being into hell (or into heaven), against this law of moral affinity.

And so it is that Jesus further explains, and on the negative side of this great question, just to show *how it is* that he will *not* manifest himself to *the world.* He simply says, "He that loveth me not keepeth not my sayings."

This is the law, and this is the philosophy of its working. The question of salvation or perdition is reduced ultimately to a matter of *taste.* And the taste determines the action, towards God or away from him—for God or against him forever. What are your tastes and affinities? God is just, and true, and good. The salvation is universal, in so far, that it is free to all—offered to all who will. But how can it take effect against any man's will, however universal it may be? The only thing that ever conditions it to any one is

his own actual and cordial acceptance of it. And beyond that absolute universality of the offer, shall any man dare demand that God shall put him under any compulsion to love him? This is impossible, inconceivable! Love can not be so compelled! God himself can not so violate all the law of moral being, as to make a man's love to him to be contrary to the man's own choice, and in utter violence to his free action.

No! And can a man make his perverse and corrupt tastes a plea for his alienation from all that is good? Is a man's taste for fraud, or theft, or murder, a plea in his defence? No, but rather an *aggravation* of it. Call it moral insanity, or what you will, we can conceive no greater freedom among men, than that one does as he pleases, and follows out his own tastes and appetites.

But whosoever will, let him *take;* nothing can be freer than this. If any man thirst, here is the living water, gushing up freely and fully from the open fountain. And no man who comes hither, wishing to find Christ, but will find Christ waiting to receive him into favor. To one who knocks for admittance at Christ's gate, there is nothing in the universe to debar him. The gate stands wide open, *night and day*, for such to enter freely. And when any such applicant doubts whether he will be accepted, let him understand that this is to doubt all Christ's word of Gospel invitation and provision. And that already he is accepted in the beloved. And let him know that heaven is for none other than such.

And there as here, the children will find the Father's house; and just because they are children, they shall come, one by one, tripping home at evening, and shall gather round the supper-table, and he will preside at the feast, and he will manifest himself in all his loving attributes to all those who love him, and who heed and cherish his word.

And all that manifestation shall be infinitely natural, genial, cordial. And as he has often come in and supped with us here, Father and Son together, along with the children, so there, we shall enter in and sup with him at the great banquet of the redeemed. And it will be *home*, and *happiness* and *heaven.*

# VI.

## THE FIVE "ONE THINGS."

'But one thing is needful."—LUKE x. 42....."One thing thou lackest."—MARK x. 21....."One thing I know."—JOHN ix. 25....."One thing have I desired of the Lord."—PSALM xxvii. 4....."But this one thing I do."—PHIL. iii. 13.

The Bible is, in a certain sense, a book of one idea. There is one doctrine taught, towards which all its passages converge. There is one interest set forth, as the essence of this divine communication to men. One duty is enjoined, in which all possible duty concentrates. As a record of history, what shall be stated as the sum of it all? "This is the record—that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son." As a message from God to us, what is the substance of it all? This is the message—"Peace on earth, goodwill toward men." As a law of living, what is the purport of it all? This is the law—"Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and thy neighbor as thyself." And as a definition of duty, what is it in the language of Jesus Christ himself? "This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent." And where this Gospel is truly embraced, it makes the man, in a strik-

ing sense, a man of one idea. His eye is single, his aim is simple, his life is expressed in one word —"To me, to *live* is *Christ!*" and so, also, death with such an one has but one result—*gain!*

I find in the Scriptures five passages, in which a certain "*one thing*" is spoken of, and these passages are comprehensive of all true religion.

The first passage is this of our Lord to Martha, Luke x. 42: "*One thing* (he says) *is needful!*" It is personal religion—the positive and absolute need of all. The great Creator of all things stands before a poor creature, who is full of various necessities, the very impersonation, as Martha was, of divers cares and worriments of life. And, as if there were only one thing, out of all that crowd of her anxieties which was really worthy her solicitude, he says: "Martha, Martha, thou art careful and troubled about many things; but one thing is needful!" Not as if all attention to domestic matters were to be rebuked. No! Not as if the cares of the household were not every way proper and commendable. Nor as if Martha were to be blamed for the beautiful example which she set of caring so much to make her house and board agreeable to the Master. *Oh, no!* But that Mary also is well situated at the feet of Jesus—that she is not to be rebuked for seeming to subordinate every thing earthly to the higher spiritual concern—and that, as a principle, which must forever decide between the Marys and the Marthas, there is just *one thing* needful; and that to this thing every thing ought to be referred. It is just

the foundation which is needful to the building. It is the main-spring which is needful to the watch. It is the light which is needful to the eye. Nay, it is the soul which is needful to the body.

And true religion, whether you define it as the love of God or the faith of Christ, is just the helm that is needed to steer the vessel on this great and tumultuous ocean—the pole-star in our sky which is needed to guide our earthly course. And as between Martha and Mary here, it is not at all a question between merely secular and merely spiritual occupation, but only a question between the different modes of serving Christ in different circumstances. For Martha is a lover of Christ, and this is the secret of her care to set his table well. But Martha's duty is not Mary's, nor is Martha responsible for Mary's service, nor is Martha to be the censor of Mary's conduct, if the Master approves. Much less is Martha to fret so over her housekeeping cares, as to chide the Master himself for not thrusting Mary from his feet, that she may give her help in her undue worriment. Nay, the subject has only one solution; true religion everywhere—in the kitchen, in the parlor, or in the sanctuary.

But the record is—"Mary also sat at Jesus' feet." Not exclusively this; not shunning to bear her part in the service also, but mingling the working and the waiting in such way as draws commendation from the Master.

Work and worship are sisters; twin sisters, shall

I say? Not work without worship! That is *slavery*. Not worship without work. That is fanaticism and heresy. Sitting at Jesus' feet and hearing his word, we get the key and clew to all holy living.

Some disparage *doctrine*, will have nothing but work, will have little to do with a *creed*, will shun any committal to definite symbols of faith; as though doctrine were not at the very bottom of duty, as though a man's *belief*, positive and well defined, must not control his *practice;* as though any one's living could mean any thing, or be of any account at all, except as founded upon his convictions. Mary also sat at Jesus' feet and heard his word, taking precious lessons of Christian doctrine in order to Christian duty; learning just *there*, at *his feet*, to do such eminent service, as to wash those sacred feet with her tears, and to wipe them with the hairs of her head; and preparing just there to do that splendid office-work of anointing, which he was pleased to account as done against the day of his burial. And thus her work had all its glowing motive and glorious crown, as being Christian work, done on the basis of Christian doctrine, learned at Jesus' feet. And when the sisters sent for Jesus to save their sick brother, this is the record; not—It was that Martha who spread his table; but, "It was *that Mary* who anointed the Lord with ointment, and wiped his feet with her hair, whose *brother Lazarus* was sick."

And so the choice of this good part is the choice

of a key to unlock all the chambers of the glorious golden palace of God! The habitual learning from Jesus, out of his word and out of his daily providence, is perhaps less showy, less bustling, less demonstrative; but it is not, on this account, deserving of the reflection which may be cast upon it from Martha's point of view. In truth this is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent. "This is life eternal, to know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent."

The busy workers who can go out among the degraded and destitute, and day and night can seek them for Christ, may sometimes complain of those whose work is more retiring and less public, as if they were doing nothing in their quiet *home* circle, or in the unpretending walks of the neighborhood. Some are always demanding that all shall work in their way, after their pattern; and nothing counts with them, in the whole varied round of service, if it be not out-of-doors work, society work, and public demonstration. Some who are always on their feet in the Christian service are not found sufficiently at the feet of Jesus. This religion must sway all our belief, must enter into all our relations, and must pervade all our affairs. And in order to this, it requires to be nourished on all sides, and to be carefully cultivated at the feet of Jesus himself—to learn of him. Else, this living of ours, amidst toil and trial, takes in too much of the merely secular element, and we lose the calm and peace which

our blessed Christianity so well affords. "*One thing is needful*," especially in the worry of modern living; to hallow life's cares, and lighten its loads, and soothe its sorrows, and chasten its tempers, and sweeten its endearments. Your cares and troubles are sent to bring you to his feet. Blessed are the Marthas who bring their cares, and even their complaints to Jesus. He will show them his grace, most resplendent upon the dark background of every sorrow. He will show them how in every trouble the eternal stars will shine out as soon as it is dark enough; and how every cloud that spreads above, and veileth love, itself is *love!* He will expound to them the elaborate system of his providence, by which, as in the music-box, every one of the sharp points that are scattered, at seeming random, on the cylinder of daily life, is set so as to strike an answering chord, just where it shall discourse the most harmonious and exquisite melody.

Again, *secondly*, we find the same "one thing" set forth by the Master—true religion. The chief essential lack of the best natural men. "One thing thou *lackest*," Mark x. 21. It is the case in which our Lord confronts the claims of a most exemplary and lovely young man, who had wealth and social position, and even a religious inclination, to make him most attractive and truly lovely. Jesus shows him wherein all his vaunted righteousness was defective and unable to stand the test.

You see the picture as it is drawn by the inspired evangelist. It is the young ruler accosting the

Master in most respectful terms; nay, running and kneeling to Him, and anxiously inquiring of Him —"What shall I do to inherit eternal life?" It is the picture of many a young man—respectful to religion indeed, but not religious nor ready to become such. It is the great chief question of our race, in contact with the means of grace, and under the pressure of divine truth. And the point of the Master's teaching and warning is this: the most direct, the most personal, the most universal —"*One thing thou lackest.*"

Who does not know that the lack of one thing, in most special circumstances, may be the lack of every thing? The wedding garment at the feast, the robe of Christ's righteousness at the judgment, the passport at the gate of heaven.

This is every thing. It is so in daily life. If a man lacks *principle*, you say this is that essential lack which spoils his best deeds, vitiates all his living, makes him utterly unreliable. If he be untrue, if he lack truth in speech or conduct, this is fatal before God and man. And this is just precisely that *one thing*—the lack of a true and proper *Christian principle* in all one's actions, which the judgment day shall expose and denounce with fearful severity. Oh how many guises shall be torn off in that day, how many sophistries exposed, how much fair-seeming will be made disgusting! How many a young man, of whom this one in the Scripture is the *type*, will be able indeed to say—"All these commandments have I kept from my youth up," they were the inculcation of

my infancy, the doctrine of parental piety, distilled upon me as rain upon the tender grass; and from the first to the tenth command, I have kept them all from my youth. Who shall say now, that I lack any thing? The Judge of all will say —"Yet lackest thou *one thing;*" and this is the new heart, this is the Christian principle, this is the divine life in the soul. Only one thing *indeed!* But as when the light is lacking to the landscape the whole scenery of fields and flowers is wrapped in darkness, and has the pall of midnight spread over all its beauty, *so* thou lackest the Sun of Righteousness to break out upon your decorous and decent living—to make it beam forth as the reflection of Jesus' image, and glow and glisten in all the hues and tints of the rainbow that is round about the throne!

And if any man questions his lack in the presence of the Master, let him only ask, Who is to pronounce upon the fact at the last day? By what standard is his life to be measured? Whose requirement is he to meet? Whose bar is he to confront? And if yet he seem to himself to be faultless, or claim to be without any essential defect, let him only submit himself to this true test of all morality—let him hear the ten commands expounded and applied at the lips of the great Lawgiver himself. He may repeat them all and respond to them all, but put to the first practical test he breaks down at the very first commandment. Has he been keeping the cold precepts of the Decalogue, and yet turned away from the liv-

ing impersonation of them all in the man Christ Jesus himself? Has he had love for his neighbor, for his friend, for his household—love for the stranger even, and only no love at all for the most lovely object in the universe? Weighed in this balance of heaven itself, the verdict is—"Yet lackest thou one thing."

Ah! you do not know, as yet, the preface to the commandments. You have not read that *Gospel*, that goes before the *Law*, that wondrous announcement of deliverance from the house of bondage, by him who says to you: "I am the Lord thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt." "Thou shalt have no other gods before me." I must have all your love.

Many wonder how it could be said here, of this very young man, with all his fatal mistake, that Jesus, looking upon him, *loved* him. But this is the Gospel itself, which we are all so slow to appreciate; the tidings of God's love to us in Jesus Christ, that comes in every Gospel message, and comes in every benediction of the sanctuary—"The love of God be with you." This is the precious, gracious truth, that the young ruler had not taken into his soul, the love of God to men, and that God sends his love to sinners in Christ Jesus, as calling for a responsive and absorbing love to him. And so the young man had failed to understand the Decalogue, and could not receive or obey it in truth, because he understood it as a task, because he had not understood the preface to it, that bade him, first of all, count himself a redeemed man,

and wake up to the high obligation of giving the heart to him who gave himself for his salvation.

And still more. Your *idolatry of the world* may be the secret poison at the vitals of all your morality. Then admit this test of Jesus—begin at the very first commandment. Who, or what is your God? What if he bid you to sell what you have and give to the poor, to empty the chaff from his vessel so as to get it filled from his store? Do you love most your gold or your God, your treasure or the well-being of your fellow-men, your large possessions which the Master allows you or the Master himself, your riches or the heritage of heaven? Is it God or mammon that you serve and obey? Oh, if *you lack* this one thing, underneath all these fair appearances you lack the new nature, the renewed temper, the celestial taste, the divine affinity, the relish for heaven itself! And so you lack every thing.

But there is, *thirdly*, another point of view, in which this *one thing* is presented to us in the Scripture. It is the one thing needful obtained, or personal religion in the experience. "One thing I know, that whereas I was blind, now I see," John ix. 25.

The case is that of the poor man upon whose dead eyeball no sweet light of sun or stars had ever shone from the beginning; the very picture of native disability. And to him Jesus came—the wonder-worker, the *Healer*, the Saviour. And upon all that darkness there burst forth the glorious light of day, and his eyes were gladdened by

a sight of the personal Redeemer, who is the Light of the World, and the Light of Life. And now, when men were puzzled at the change, when friends crowded around the cured man to inquire into the wondrous phenomena, when they said it was so impossible, so incredible, that a *man* should by a *word* open the eyes of one born blind, he answers to it all, out of his own experience, "One thing I *know*, that whereas I was blind now I see."

It is the amazing contrast of what he is with what he was, which certifies him of the change. His long cherished misconceptions of the truth are gone. What he was so naturally blind to, what he never could *see* though it was often described to him, what he could never understand though so often explained to him, *now he sees it all.* It comes flashing into his inmost soul with all its inimitable beauty—God's love to men in the Gospel and the glorious salvation by Jesus Christ, in all its glorious colors. What wonder that only one object now fills his eye, only one truth is to him the sum of all knowledge; and far beyond all his common understanding of truths in nature or truths in history, far beyond his knowledge of common facts attested by observation and experience, is the absolute certainty which he has of *this one thing!* It is a thing which has gone down to the depths of his soul, and has struck its roots deeply into the very fibres and tissues of his being. It is matter of living consciousness. Whatever Pharisees may profess to *know* to the contrary, and vaunting Scribes or his own parents

may assert, all this does not disturb him at all in *this one thing*, which he certainly and undeniably *knows* for himself. Nay, whatever he may not know, as yet, about this one thing, he knows the thing itself, knows *the fact*, that the change has passed upon his mental and moral being; that it is now the gladdest of all cures which a man could experience, to have his dead eyeball quickened, and a universe of beauty let in, with the flood of day, upon his joyous sense. As if God had just now flung out all these worlds for him, and decked the fields with all their flowers, and the faces of friends with all their nameless charms, and discovered Jesus to him, as his best friend, to fill his soul with oceans of happiness. Let the vain world, let arrogant reason, let the devil himself, with all his cunning, seek to throw skeptic suspicions upon the sources of this untold pleasure, and to dry up the fountains of this joy, and to poison the springs of this new-born hope. They must first destroy the very constitution of the soul, must vitiate all the evidence of experience, must make a man to disbelieve—I will not say his senses of sight, and hearing and feeling, for they *may* deceive him—but to disbelieve his own self.

Tell me that this domain of religious experience is not the proper sphere of knowledge. I tell you this is the very field of positive knowledge. To all the vagaries of a blind philosophy and a deaf science, claiming to know more than the Scripture or more than God, the Christian man still answers boldly, "*One thing I know*, that whereas

I was blind, now I see." He witnesses of this Redeemer's work upon himself, of this one thing as the great requisite, and witnesses of its reality in his own case. He says, "one thing to me was needful, and that was my sight; one thing indeed I lacked, and that was the cure! But now, one thing *I know*, that the blessed change has been wrought upon me which has altered all my being." Oh poor blind sinner, do you claim that you *see?* that you apprehend truth and appreciate it in its real bearings, and yet like Pilate in the presence of the King of Truth and of the Person of Truth itself, are vainly querying, "What is truth?" I tell you this one thing must yet become a matter of your inward and personal experience, before you can speak or act advisedly! Till this change shall take place upon you you are at best even here in the sanctuary only a blind Nicodemus, groping about by night, and in the presence of the Master, asking, "How can these things be?"

And, *fourthly*, another passage presents still another and further aspect of this *one thing*. It is true religion in the heart as the spring of true devotion. It is the Psalmist's fervent aspiration, in which he seems to have but one great wish—one hearty desire—that absorbs his whole soul, and swallows up all the passions of his being. Psalm xxvii. 4: "One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after, that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to inquire in his temple."

Here it is, that the *one principle* works within, in one characteristic style of impulse and emotion. This is its natural development in worship. The Christian is a man of prayer and praise. His chosen occupation is worship, his chosen home is the sanctuary, his favorite study is the character and ways of God. The personal object in all the universe that most attracts him is the Lord Jesus, and clustering around the house of God are his dearest, fondest *home delights*. Here are his companions and friends, here he chooses his residence for a permanency; and this one taste is the expression of all the highest, strongest affinities of his being.

To know a man's character, ask only what *delights* him most. What *places* does he chiefly frequent? What circle of friendship does he seek, what is his chosen study and occupation, what are his leanings and likings, and what are his longings day by day, culminating at the top and crown of the week? The word of God, the house of God, the worship of God, the people of God, the service of God, the favor of God, and God himself—*these* express, for a true Christian, his whole circle of interests.

"Thou art the sea of love,
Where all my pleasures roll;
The circle where my passions move,
And centre of my soul."

The *one thing* needful is found. The *one thing* lacking is supplied. The one thing that he knows beyond all dispute is this new perception he has

of the divine beauty, and this new sense and eyesight of all that is so transcendently lovely in the character and work and ways of God himself. And he can not keep it secret. He must give it public expression, in the public confession of Christ and Christianity. And you had as well expect a lighted lamp to keep the light a secret, or the rose to hold back its fragrance, as expect a Christian not to confess Christ. And the one engrossing desire that expresses the highest longings of his nature is this—a personal communion with God; and if anywhere on earth a table is spread for this he will find it. It is this heaving and swelling of his bosom after fellowship with the Most High which does, in effect, make every place to him a place of worship, and every act an act of worship, and sets the sanctuary far above all earthly resorts, and establishes the man in a habitual devoutness, until his face shall seem to shine and glow in the radiance of his interviews with God. Such an one illustrates the true religion, in all his tastes and fellowships. And when, on the Sabbath, or during the week, he comes up to the courts of God, you can see that it is from no constraint, but out of a hearty choice; that it is his *home*, that it is more attractive to him even than his own hearth-stone, and the dear circle of his household, because this is the dwelling-place of God, his heavenly Father, and the chosen resting-place of the soul. And such a prevalent temper is the guarantee of all good desires, and the pledge of all holy and happy experience.

But there is still another and crowning aspect, in which this one thing is presented. It is personal religion essential in the *life*, or Christian activity exemplified.

"*This one thing I do*," Philippians iii. 13. *Paul* is the man who says it—that man of gigantic enterprises and of vast and varied exploits, whom you see at Jerusalem, at Athens, at Corinth, at Ephesus, at Rome, confronting all oppositions, refuting all sophistries, establishing and supervising all the churches. Yet it is only *one thing* he does; as the sun does only one thing—that he shines and shines *for all*, and comprehends all within his glowing circuit, and sheds his radiance upon all creatures and objects under the broad heavens.

This is the sublime *unity* of the Christian living, that in effect it has but one aim, knows but one object, moves in but one orbit, and tends always towards one grand result. This is no narrowness of thought and feeling, but only a world-wide comprehension of all truth and duty. If there seem to be various forces at work in his life, there is this resultant of them all to be found. If there be disturbances at times in his motions, there is yet a balance even of those disturbances, like that balancing of perturbations which holds the planets in their track and wheels them along in their spheres. This makes a man consistent and principled—that he has *no two Gods* to serve, no *two courses* to pursue, no *two ends* to fulfil, no *two destinies* to attain. This steady, uniform aim and object of life develops into all the manifold Christian

enterprises of church work and Christian beneficence. This is the beautiful singleness of eye which makes the whole body full of light, where there is this fixed focus of his vision, and no double sight. This is the simplicity and transparency of his conduct—a man of one huge, steady, life-long undertaking, of one grand thought, of one burning desire, of one overmastering impulse; like the runner of a race, with his eye intent upon the one goal, straining every nerve and bending every energy for the achievement; like the great racer who, even if he wound himself on the track, will struggle bravely through. This is the secret of all efficiency, of all fidelity, of all success.

But observe here, *this one thing* that the Christian does is to *progress in the divine life.* It is to advance in Christian attainment. It is no sitting at ease, as though the getting of this religion were like getting a jewel to wear, instead of an implement to use or a life to live. There must be the natural and necessary development of that germ which is implanted in the new birth, that grows to the stature of a matured and ripened manhood. And yet how few seem to have discovered that this religion, instead of being a thing for the Sabbath merely, or for a mere ritualistic service, is a thing to pervade the whole being, and to enter into every thought and feeling and action. It consists not so much in doing certain religious and spiritual things, as in doing all things upon a religious and *spiritual principle.* This is, indeed, just the difference between a mere empty formalism

and a true Christian living. And the atmosphere of such a piety is no such dusky twilight as makes men doubtful whether the sun is up, but you know that the Sun of Righteousness has risen on the world of such a man, from beholding every object lighted up by its effulgence and glowing in its beams. And it is not with such an apologizing for deviations from the course—for excesses or indulgences; there is no narrowing and diminishing of the divine requirement by worldly interpretation, no excuse for want of *progress* in religion. No! but rather a whole-souled effort and determination to progress to the highest possible attainment. It is no self-satisfied and self-righteous living, as though between the man and God there was no great distance to be traversed, in reaching the celestial perfection; but it is an ever onward "pressing toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus," an ever increasing wrestle with all forms and powers of evil in the world. This is the lack of the modern piety, my hearers, that it makes no such strenuous, persistent, daily efforts at advance; that it does not pursue this divine perfection as men run and struggle for a prize.

And yet is not this perfectness essential to the heavenly estate? And are you even at any near approach to that unspotted holiness in which you are hoping to appear before God? I assure you, my brethren, there can be nothing miraculous in the transformation of any soul to fit it for glory, any more than to fit it for woe. It is the *one*

*thing* throughout—the one thing that is essentially needful to every man, and the one thing that is essentially lacking with every unrenewed man, and the one thing that the converted man has found out, like a new eyesight to the dead eyeball, and the one thing that shapes his daily longings for the worship and service of God. This is still the one thing which unifies the life, and which gives definiteness to the course, and balance to the tendencies, and singleness to the aim, and harmony to the powers and passions; which makes heaven a necessity for him. One thing is certain, heaven can be the home of those only who *long after it* and *travel towards it.* That prize can be reached by no lottery, but only by those who run here the race whose terminus is crowned with this bright reward.

We have not reached the goal, my brethren. Why sit down as though all our work of heart-culture were finished, when it is scarce begun? Where is the daily self-inspection such as a common prudence would dictate in the midst of dangers, such as the smallest degree of interest would call for to secure the great result? And are you getting no daily inspirations from the upper world for which you profess to hope? Does not the foresight of that eternity animate you in daily duty? Is not the crown of glory such a shining reality, and such a splendid reward, as to call forth all the longings of your soul? What are you living for, if not for that? What *one thing* are you doing, if not reaching forth for *that?* And amidst all the

excitements of the race, the perils of defeat, the glories of victory, can you possibly help thinking, how very soon the race will be run and the eternal issue decided? And what can be more certain than that, as is the course you are running, so must be the goal? You can not expect to strain all the energies of your being along the downward road, and find it just at the last moment, by a *sudden turn*, landing you into heaven. The very path you daily travel projects into eternity; and as, in some of the great cities which lie on both sides of a river, *the very streets the other side* the river match with these which you are now traversing on this side,—and as on one side of the river is your business, so on the other side is your residence and rest,—so far away into the ages upon ages, these same roads stretch on, and on, and on, forever and ever. And this one thing which you do now you will do then and eternally.

And now, my hearers, there remains with each one for himself, but *one question*. It regards *this one thing!* Are you doing this? I ask not what else you are doing for yourselves, for your families, for the world. Are you *doing this one thing*, and doing this in every thing, so that every thing you do may resolve itself into this—all words of definition into *one word*—"For me to live is *Christ*." "Not slothful in business, fervent *in spirit*, SERVING THE LORD."

# VII.

## "TO THE UTTERMOST."

"Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them."—HEB. vii. 25.

When the Son of God was born a babe at Bethlehem, what should be his name? What should Gabriel announce as the charmed word by which he should be called—the title by which he should be most familiarly and fondly known among the crowds of sinners, to the end of time? Not Creator, not Upholder of the Universe, not Judge of the World, but—JESUS, Saviour! The name that is above every name.

Tell me not of other ability that he has to garnish the heavens, and lay the foundations of the earth, and to raise the dead and judge men and angels; but tell me has he ability to save—at all times, in all extremities, and all classes of men? Can he save a chief sinner, can he save you and me, can he save me now, as I am? Is he so great a Saviour that he can not fail us, if we trust in him?

And how is this ability proven? On what grounds may it be alleged without contradiction?

He is sometimes set forth as able to save on the ground of his proper Godhead. "Look unto me,

and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth, for *I am God* and there is none else!" Here in the text, however, the apostle infers this saving ability from his priestly character and office-work, as so superior to that of the sons of Aaron.

He is no half-way Saviour, because he has an unchangeable priesthood, that does not descend to some successor by reason of death. He *ever liveth* to carry on what he has begun and to consummate it, in every case, as a complete and eternal salvation. He ever liveth to intercede, to make our cause his own.

The undying intercession of Christ is here presented as the basis of his supreme ability to save. If any one would possibly think of that intercession as if it were the plea of the Divine Son with the Father, to overcome his enmity and to persuade his reluctance, let him hear the Scriptures—"God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

The argument here is brief and conclusive. As the shepherd has his sheep, who are objects of his special care and keeping; as the attorney has his clients, for whom he pleads at law as for none others; as the representative has his constituency, for whom he stands and with whose interests he is charged to carry them through; so Jesus Christ, the advocate with the Father, undertakes the case of all those who come unto God through him.

Of what avail were the temple, altar and priest of the old economy, in all their glory, if no man

had come forward with his lamb of sacrifice? The priest ministered for sinners who needed expiation, and who sought the priestly services, appointed by God in such case; who came bringing their lamb or bullock for the altar with confession of sin, and for all such those Aaronic high-priests acted and were able to save, just so far as that ritual function could suffice. Jesus, the ever-living High-priest, who is also the *Lamb of God*, is able to save all who come unto God by him.

And beyond all that those ritual priests could ever do, he is able to save most completely and eternally through and through.

Whoever seeks his priestly ministrations, his sacrifice and his intercessions, finds him able to save unto the uttermost. And if any are not saved, it is only because they have disdained his office-work, have not committed their souls to his hands, have not sought his expiation, have not applied for his merits, have not besought him to undertake for them, as the true and living Intercessor and Saviour.

The idea of the text is, that Jesus is no *half-way* Saviour; the exact language is, that he is able to save unto *completion* or *consummation*.

And this is in distinction from those Levitical priests of the ancient ritual, whose function was external and typical. They could, in a sense, save only half-way; while they were officiating, too, they died; they could bring nothing to completion; they only led to the gate-way of salvation, and here they stood, in holy vestments, confessing

their inability to deliver the soul from death, and pointing forward to the great High-priest that was to come.

Let us consider in the first place: Jesus is able to save to the *uttermost of* SIN!

There were certain crimes under the Mosaic law for which no expiation could be made—so flagrant, so wilful, so capital, that they were expressly debarred from the priestly mediation. But no such sin is set down under the Gospel, as transcending the power of Christ's blood to wash it away. "The blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from *all* sin." For wilful murder and blasphemy the priestly office, under the Mosaic dispensation, could not atone; but even the murder of Jesus himself can be expiated by the very blood those murderers shed, and even blasphemy against the Son of Man is a crime expressly marked as within the scope of forgiveness under the Gospel. The murder of a fellow-creature, whose blood, like Abel's, is crying from the earth and interceding with God for vengeance, *can* be pardoned by the louder outcry of the blood of Jesus, interceding for the criminal's salvation.

See Saul, with a Satanic malice, compelling feeble, frightened Christian men and women to blaspheme; but instead of lightning flashes of wrath overwhelming him, there come the lightning gleams of mercy! Hear him testify—"It is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom *I am chief*."

And, of all sins that have ever been named by God or man, there is *only one* that is counted *unpardonable*, and that seems rather the combination and concentration of all in one—*blasphemy against the Holy Ghost.*

We know not the nature of it, only that it implies a settled malignity and despite that breaks out against the sweet Spirit of grace—against the only Power that can reach and renovate the soul. It is a malignity that would grieve the Spirit and quench the Spirit and resist the Spirit, so as madly to spurn all his gentle and gracious and saving offices. And it would seem to be only a consummation of all those resistances and oppositions to which an incorrigible soul may be given over, to dash the cup of life from its very lips and to trample under foot the son of God, doing despite unto the spirit of grace.

And then beyond the official ability there is also an *effective ability* here provided, which carries on the salvation through and through to the rooting out of the most stubborn and desperate sin.

Sinful habits will seem to defy the divine power in the heart and life; besetting sins long cherished will still get the mastery. No wonder that the Christian cries out at times—"Oh, wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me?" Can all such evil tempers and mad passions be eradicated? Can this legion of devils be exorcised? *All* of them. And the man who had wandered among the tombs, raving and gashing himself—*can he* be so thoroughly made a new creature as to be found sitting at the

feet of Jesus clothed and in his right mind? Yes. It has been done! It can be done again! This is the great salvation—a process going on within us, saving us to-day from the sins of yesterday, and saving us, through and through, to the end.

He saves *to the uttermost.* The poor besotted creature who has been a beastly slave to his cups, even he is lifted up by Jesus from this degradation, and raised to the dignity of a man again. The profane swearer, whose every sentence was intensified by an oath, is brought to loathe the fiendish habit that so associates a man, prematurely, with the world of curses and the abode of the lost. The gambler and the Sabbath-breaker, who had become so addicted to their cherished vices as to have made them a second nature, are led to put them off as their shame, and to dread them as their ruin. And the grovelling, debased idolater of mammon, who has sold himself to covetousness and greed, even he is raised up out of the dust of his idolatries and has his heart opened to the obedience of Christ.

There can be no complete salvation which does not complete this deliverance from *sin*—from all sinful tastes, impulses, habits and principles—however inbred and however stubborn to the last. He will present us *faultless!* It seems impossible I know! But it is not impossible to divine grace.

But, *secondly*, Jesus is able to save, *to the uttermost of mental infirmity.*

It is the glory of the Gospel plan that it reaches the divine arm down to the lowest depth of hu-

mankind. The poor child of ignorance can not say, "This is too high for me, I am no scholar." Jesus comes with his precious, glorious Gospel, and it is found to be for *babes*. Only the boasted wise and prudent can not understand it. The very simplicity of its teachings and of its terms hides it from such. The more they philosophize and speculate and apply the logic of the schools, the more they overlay the gems with rubbish and go blind in their own light. But the children see it while the parents hesitate and doubt.

It was so at Jerusalem. The boys and girls, such as gather at our Sabbath-schools, came rushing out of the Temple and greeted him with hosannas, while the proud Pharisees and Scribes rebuked them as disturbers of the peace. They called it puerile, but Jesus understood it and accepted it as an ovation to him, next to the song of the angels.

And then, how the Sabbath-school classes sit at his feet, and sing their sweet anthems to his praise, and come thronging in his footsteps and crowding at his table, while so many adults scorn to be learners and so never find out that he is Jesus. Oh! when shall our Jerusalem be full of boys and girls playing in the streets thereof! When the time shall come that Jesus shall be confessed and followed by the children with their hosannas, then shall be the time of Christ's triumphal entry into the church and the world.

And further, *thirdly*. He is able to *save to the uttermost of present deficiency* and *disability*.

Thousands under the Gospel have not understood this. Here it is, precisely, that we stand to-day, exhorting men to believe and be saved. This is just the credence and confidence he asks, that he can save you to-day—this moment—as you are—where you are—sinner though you are—able to save the most unable!

You believe that he is able to save some certain ones, who have fulfilled certain conditions; all who come unto God, by him, aright—who come penitent, broken-hearted, believing—but not *you*, who are none of these, and who have no right affections whatever, and therefore you are waiting till you can get in a condition to be saved by him. If you are in a condition to desire his salvation, that is the very condition in which he loves to save.

You ask me if he can save you without any further preliminaries or preparations? Yes! But you say; "Where is the new heart to come from?" That he will give. "Where is the faith to come from?" That he gives. You demand then to know, if you may from this moment rest upon him your whole salvation? Yes; it is just this. Must you, then, first of all—now—this hour—put your whole case into the hands of this Intercessor, call him your Saviour, and count all the benefits of his finished work on earth and his eternal work in heaven *yours?* Yes. What warrant has any one to go to any other being in the universe for any part of the salvation? What warrant has any sinner to delay, *one moment*, his acceptance of Je-

sus as his Saviour, when the atoning work is all done, and the Gospel is proclaimed to all with all the glad tidings, and the water of life is gushing from the fountain freely and for all?

You ask me: "Is there then nothing for the applicant to do, but to read here the message and to say—"*Jesus is mine!*" and to live in the blessed, grateful confidence of this fact? Nothing to do, but this. To whomsoever this Gospel is glad tidings, to him it is the Gospel.

When will men understand that Jesus is able to save to the uttermost—not half-way, but through and through, from beginning to end. The poor African understood it in that favorite couplet:

> "I am a poor sinner, and nothing at all,
> But Jesus Christ is my all in all."

Jesus said, "To the poor the Gospel is preached."

Of what avail is it that I give a man a draft for a thousand pounds, payable to his order, if he will not believe it is for him, or for his present use, apart from all considerations? He says, "How can it be? This is not for me. I have never earned it. There is some mistake. I have no claim upon this party, none whatever; to say nothing of such an amount. It may be for some other one of my name, or even for me upon some unexpressed conditions, but surely not for me as a free gift!" and he will not even endorse his name upon the back of the draft nor apply for the money at the bank. So it is with multitudes who disbelieve and to whom it is as though Jesus had never died.

You have seen men also, who would not allow you to help them, whose vicious proclivities made all your solicitude vain and your utmost bounty useless.

In this light I protest that this salvation is as universal as the nature of the case will admit. It is proclaimed freely to "Whosoever will" and what can be *freer* than that? How can there be a salvation for those who *will not?* The Bible will compel no man's belief; God will thrust no man into heaven against his convictions and against his will. No! No!! If you want it, take it—take it as a gift—for it is even such an absolute gratuity that you can have it no otherwise than as a gift.

But, *fourthly*, Jesus is able to save to the *uttermost of temptation!*

The strife is sometimes severe. As against the Tempter and all his power, and all his hellish arts, Jesus is omnipotent to save. No matter how malevolent be the devices which the arch-adversary plies to the ruin of a believer, following him on through life, Jesus does not allow him to pluck any soul out of his hands.

The secret of this is found in that wonderful, all-powerful intercession with which he bears the tempted one upon his bosom at the right hand on high. And just because *he can not die*, the intercession can not cease, nor can the cause which he has undertaken be relinquished; nor can he ever be found inactive, or indifferent, or unequal to the case. But always pleading and always prevail-

ing, as he is, Satan can not snatch any one, of the weakest even, from his covenant grasp.

Look at Peter. There is no doubt of the struggle there—that heaven and hell were contending for that apostle. Jesus tells him plainly: "Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat, but"—*but*—"*I have prayed* for thee, that thy faith fail not!" Ah, there is the secret.

So with the martyr-maid of Scotland, when the persecutors bound her to the stake on the sea-beach, where soon the rising tide would come in upon her and drown her in the flood. There are the frowning soldiers clamoring for her recantation! There are the advancing waves steadily approaching! She can overhear the cries of her elder sister, tied at a forward stake and just now drowning in the surge. They only demand of her to say: "God save the king!" The mother in the crowd cries out to her, "My bonnie Margaret, give in and dinna break my heart;" but she sings: "To thee, O God, I lift my soul." It seems the least possible abjuration of her Saviour, but that Saviour is precious to her, just because he is so *mighty to save*, and she feels the power of his intercessions sustaining her in her fearful straits. Old ocean thunders out to her the voice of God in all the promises,

> "And
> The tide flows in and, rising to her throat,
> She sang no more, but lifted up her face
> And there was glory over all the sky,
> And there was glory over all the sea—

A flood of glory—and the lifted face
Swam in it, till it bowed beneath the flood
And Scotland's maiden martyr went to God."

So with many a weak frame that goes boldly to the stake and embraces the fiery cross of martyrdom. There is no principle on which you can account for such heroic fortitude and such unflinching faith, except that he who prayed for Peter that his faith should not fail, was praying for these also.

So with the serf of some cruel despot; he is commanded to renounce his religion. *No!* It is not that he is free to seek another home, it is not that he has friends and helpers, it is not that he has money in bank, it is not that he has any earthly recourse from his infuriated master. *No!* It is only that he has a Master in heaven whom he will serve, and from whose love no threats nor tortures can separate him.

And so, the poor tempted one, who is always trembling, always doubting—looking to the Spirit's unfinished work within for some ground of hope, instead of to Christ's finished work without where the Tempter has almost baffled the weak beginnings of trust, has almost wrested from the worrying mind the first, faint, feeble confidence—even here Jesus saves. That germ of grace he has implanted, that faint spark of faith, he will fan yet to a flame. He does not break the bruised reed nor quench the smoking flax, but he brings forth judgment unto victory.

But again, Jesus is able to *save to the uttermost of lowly condition in life.*

Look at Lazarus, whose friends can only lay him daily at the rich man's gate, if, possibly, he may get some of the crumbs that fall from that lordly table. Who will save Lazarus? The dogs, that lie in lazy groups on the sunny streets of that oriental city, will gather round him as if he were cast out there to rot in his beggary and sores. But within the veil that hides from us the invisible world, angels are busy preparing to escort that dying beggar to the choicest mansion in Paradise. Who would not rather be Lazarus than Dives?

But who will save that miserable wretch who, writhing on his cross at Jerusalem, expiating to the law his treason against the state—that insurrectionist who had imbued his hands in blood and been brought to the cursed tree along with Jesus —who is most forlorn, most helpless, most forsaken of friends, most destitute and desolate—to whom salvation seems impossible? Jesus is able to save —able to save to the uttermost—able to save today in answer to the faint and faltering cry for remembrance at a future coming in his kingdom—beyond all expectation, beyond all conception of ability and success, he can do it and he will.

The widow of Nain with her only son upon the bier, the sisters of Bethany with their only brother in the grave, the ruler Jairus with his only daughter dead in her sweet childhood before his eyes—*he can save, even there.* No condition in life where he can not save, no case so helpless and hopeless as to be beyond the sphere of his salvation, for all who come unto God through him.

But, *finally*. Jesus is able to save to the *uttermost limit of this mortal existence.*

I know that, on all common human calculations, you would say, "*It can not be so!*" that the man who has spent his lifetime in rejecting Jesus, and has wasted his energies in opposition to his Gospel, can not be accepted at the last moment. I know that, while I must speak the truth on this point, that truth will be abused. But it is still true!

And this is the sublimity and glory of the grace, that it can overleap all a man's life-long misdoings, and make good the Gospel word, even at the dying moment. The poor worldling who comes up to the brink of eternity full of his avarice and folly, and dreaming yet of gains and gold while death is on his clammy brow, even he MAY hear the Gospel word and LIVE. Yes, my hearer, for the same Gospel news is published to all, and it does not except any who will. We have no other Gospel for such extreme cases than the same which we have for you, in health and buoyancy to-day. The dying thief, recent from his robbery and murder, and with the words of reviling fresh upon his lips, even he, from his cross, may lift his dying prayer to Jesus from a heart of true desire, which merges into humble faith as he is welcomed the same day to Paradise.

Ah, my hearer, the difficulty with death-bed repentance is not in *Jesus*. No! It is not that he withholds his salvation at that utmost limit of life in a just retaliation, or because it makes him take up with the devil's leavings! *No!* Even this he

will do, and welcome the returning prodigal when he is starving to death, and seeking refuge from amidst the husks and the swine of his profligacy! But the difficulty is with the man himself, that having been all his lifetime running down the steep, he can not at his mere option turn back, any more than Niagara can leap back with all its floods up the steep precipice. Having all his days blinded his mind and poisoned his thoughts with unbelief, he can not now easily dismiss his cavils and receive the truth as it is in Jesus. Jesus is able as ever, ready as ever! It is not that the stubbornness of that long persistency in sin has steeled his divine heart to the dying outcries. *No!* His Gospel comes still the same, "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come: weary and heavy-laden ones, come ye, without money and without price; whosoever will, let him take." But now the man himself can not credit his ability; he can not be persuaded that there is any salvation for such an one, at such a last moment; his own conscience turns against him and cries out, "*Too late;*" Satan, who will fain seize the departing spirit, taunts him with the cry, "*Too late;*" and just because the man has never known Christ—never listened to his love—he finds himself when he would wish to believe, *doubting*, *hesitating*, *distrusting*, *denying*, *despairing!* And amidst this self-imposed and cherished darkness, he sinks into the blackness of darkness, self-condemned, heaping reproaches upon his own soul, and can't believe that Jesus is able to save so to the uttermost! *But he is!* I tell him that he is, but

he can't believe it, yet Jesus must be credited and trusted; for in the trusting spirit is the peace and joy of his salvation—the germ of life and blessedness and glory.

And thus, also, he is able to save to the uttermost in nature's final hour. Where human power can go no further—where best friends, with all their fondest love, have done their utmost—watching, soothing, helping against the advances of the last enemy, until now the dear one is given up as beyond the reach of kindliest sympathies—*then*, far out at life's uttermost verge, another work is going on. The friend that sticketh closer than a brother is busy there, and spirit with spirit is communing there, and the king's servants are hovering around the dying couch there, whispering of heaven and ready to be the escort to glory. And in the very article of dissolution, when the farewells have been all spoken and no name of wife or husband or child or parent stirs any sensibility any longer, and you say it is "*death*" and you feel no pulse any more—even then, the name of *Jesus* will rouse the dying pulses that seem utterly gone, and there will be a response from the very embrace of death to that Name which is above every name, as the Conqueror of Death and Hell! Oh! I have seen it. The *last dying smile*, which no other salutation could command, plays upon the pallid features at the mention of that magic *name*.

That dying senator! The scene was beautiful as the beautiful gates that he saw opening into

glory. Looking out, as he did, for the last time upon the nation's Capitol, and the sun shining on its dome, and then up to the great white throne and the starry seats that circle it, and the Father's house, where all the good and truly great of the race are fast gathering—that was the Christian statesman dying.

And then I have seen the dear little ones die—the Christian children—and they saw the same beautiful gates as this Christian statesman saw, and they cried out as he did—"*Beautiful, beautiful*"— as they were borne by the angels to the same heavenly home.

And then, observe that at that uttermost extremity, when all earthly helpers must give up and can do no further work of relief or of salvation, Jesus goes on to save—triumphs there as the only Saviour, displays his supreme and matchless ability to save through and through. Where death and the grave boldly defy any and all others, see how HE saves to the very completion—saves even from the *fear* of death, saves from the bitterness and sting of death, saves from impatience and repining amidst the dying agonies, saves even from all these overwhelming anxieties that you would think must make the death-bed of a fond parent so terrible, where the orphan children must be left behind without earthly provision. And there you see the salvation in the triumphant calm and peace wrought out for the departing spirit, and victory sits upon the brow, and a longing, *longing* for the heavenly home seems to throw the fondest earthly

home into the shade! And the heavenly society—kindred and friends that are there—seem so ineffably attractive as to make those dear ones that were most doted on here only secondary and inferior in their charms.

And all this is the proof—the shining proof—that Jesus is able to save to the uttermost. And the secret of all this is that yonder in heaven at the Father's side he is busy in his intercessions—the living Saviour—actively officiating for his dying children where the dying Stephen saw him—praying that they may be with him where he is, that they may behold his glory, and so he comes down and meets them in the dark valley, with his shepherd rod and staff, and stands at the dying bed, vanquishing Satan and hushing his malicious accusations, and whispering peace! And his own Spirit—the Blessed third Person of the Trinity—is making responsive intercessions in the heart, with groanings that can not be uttered, taking of the things of Christ and showing them to the inward sight while the natural eye is sealing up in death, opening the vision to celestial glories at the very moment that it is utterly closed to earth—

"Trembling, hoping—lingering, flying,
Oh! *the pain*—THE BLISS of dying."

"Oh! had we learned what death alone brings nigh,
The dread had been to live and not to die."

# VIII.

## PERSONAL LOVE OF JESUS.

"Now Jesus loved Martha, and her sister, and Lazarus."—JOHN xi. 5.

The personal love of Jesus is that of which we find it hard to be persuaded; especially, as respects ourselves, that the risen, glorified God-man, from his throne, loves me; loves me—a sinner as I am—loves me by name, loves me as distinct and different from all others, loves me with all my infirmities, loves me with any such love as we feel and value in our human circles—this is hard to estimate and apply. Yet the whole Gospel is based upon the idea of *personal love*—that makes it good news and glad tidings to individuals, and not merely to the race in general.

And love itself, if it were only universal and not particular, if it were only judicial and governmental and not personal, would not be valued by any of us. Nay, even such fatherhood as is claimed by those who hold God equally bound to all, and indiscriminate, therefore, in his salvation, can have no perceptible, sensible weight with any man to control his living. It is practically nought until it comes home to himself and reaches his individual

case. For, if the love that is felt towards me is only a sort of official love, then I do not value it as appealing to my heart; if it is an indiscriminating love, only the same to me as to all men, then I do not feel the sweet constraint of it, with all its claims to a loving return; if it lay no demand for holy living, and make no provision whatever for personal character, then I can not respect it, as worthy of consideration. The Gospel provision, though it proclaim good-will to men in general, is, nevertheless, in its whole idea, a provision for men in particular; and the salvation can be applied only as it comes home to each case by itself, and makes its claims personal in all their application.

Love therefore is, in its very nature, special and partial. This is its ruling idea. It finds a personal object among others on which it fixes with fond affection, and it is only by such personal choice that one or another comes to be a special recipient of one's love. Out of such affinities grow all the tender and endearing relations which prevail among creatures. And God himself recognizes this high law of love for his own action.

But we can not readily feel the force of Jesus' love, as we can feel that of fellow-creatures. It seems so theoretical, so merely doctrinal and theological. It is hard to bring it to any sensible realization—as if we could feel his warm hand grasping ours, or his warm embrace, or his loving kiss, pressing us to his heart.

And yet, if we consider, his love must be even more real and more personal than that of fondest

friends. If he could come to our home, and lodge under our roof, and sit at our table, in the flesh, as he did in the family at Bethany, this would make it more real to our apprehension. If we could see him coming in at our door at our call of distress, if we could see his tears of sympathy at the grave of a brother, if we could hear him summon our dead from the tomb—then we could value the love as something more than human. But he is distant, he is invisible. And yet he is *personally present* with us, only not in the flesh; all the while present, as he could not be in the flesh; more really and fully and effectively present than he could ever be in the body. He is able to succor us in every case, more able, by far, than if he were bound to those earthly conditions of his humiliation.

And now the question is simply a *personal* one. Does *Jesus love me?* If so, is he then daily and hourly caring for *me*, keeping me? Is it his hand that preserved me in that peril, sheltered me from that blow, raised me from that sickness. Nay, was the physician's counsel and remedy his actual agency by another hand? And am I to thank him for the daily bread and for the night's repose? Can I so receive and believe it? This is the practical difficulty. And hence we are prone to go as if there were no Jesus' love beating in his heart towards us, or as if the truth, in this respect, were only the cold doctrine of a creed, and not a living reality.

The passage before us tells us of Jesus' love to

a family group at Bethany. The announcement is brief. It descends to no particulars as to the personal grounds, only it includes the household. This is beautiful.

The household covenant is a feature of both economies of grace. It was instituted as the leading feature of the covenant with Abraham, and looked to his generations so distinctly and specially as to require the sacramental seal of this household relationship. The family itself is God's institution, and it was meant to subserve a glorious design in the economy of grace. Else, why did he set the solitary in families, why did he reveal himself as having a love for the households of his people, except it were to sanctify those relations, and to make all that special influence that clusters round the family hearth a ministry of grace and salvation? At the beginning, the church was in the house. And this is still and always, the fundamental, vital idea. Family religion is in order to sanctuary ordinances and church privileges, and it is essential to the existence of the church.

God perpetuates his church by means of a pious posterity. If there had been no sacrament of infant baptism in the Christian church, this would have seemed such a defect in the light of the past economy, and in the view of our natural constitution in the household, that we should have heard the Jew clamoring against the Gospel as being narrow and restrictive, and as denying to him the benefits which he enjoyed for his house, under the old dispensation. Nay, more, I think par-

ents would scarcely have been encouraged to bring their infant children to the arms of Jesus for his blessing, and he would scarcely have uttered to them those precious words, "Suffer *the little children* to come unto me and forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of heaven." Nay, further. If there had been found no *baptism* for *households* —such as Lydia's and the jailer's—we are sure that there would have been a loud call for such an ordinance to take the place of circumcision, as a seal of the covenant of grace.

The whole question of *infant baptism* resolves itself into the simple question of the unity of Scripture and the unity of the old and new dispensations. And hence, they who have denied infant baptism, as belonging to the New Testament, have been forced, in distinguished instances, to deny the obligation of the Old Testament upon the Christian church, as a rule of life.

And the whole Christian instinct cries out against this, and every parental instinct cries out against the denial of a sacramental ordinance for the children. How can we look upon the dear children at Christmas-time and bid them be happy in the birth of the Bethlehem Babe, and yet hold them to be excluded from the covenant blessings by the Lord Jesus—as if the covenant with Abraham had been a grand mistake, and as if Christ Jesus had not come as a child in order to express his sympathy with the children, and to compass them about with the arms of his love. It is just by such means as this household baptism that Jesus Christ would

have his religion introduced into the family, and would have our children marked as his from the first, just as the oriental shepherd took pains to put his brand upon the lambs, for they were most in danger of going astray.

This household at Bethany is a household of the children, as Abraham's household was—the sisters and an only brother are here—where the parents are no more. And all along the list they are recorded as Christ's—Martha, her sister, and Lazarus.

What a blessed home! How close the affinity and how sacred the joy in each other's love! No one of them outside! No antagonisms, therefore, as where the church and the world are brought into conflict in the same home circle! No painful anxieties, as where one straying one is watched by sisterly care and counsel, all in vain. "*Martha, and her sister, and Lazarus!*" All of them bound up together in the bundle of eternal love.

But we notice further, that it was Jesus' love to that family, not *in the general*, but in the *particular!* It was to each of them by *name.*

And this included personal peculiarities, differences of taste and temper—I know not what. We can already see how Martha differed from Mary, and yet Jesus loved them both; the careful, anxious housekeeper, as well as the devout worshipper at his feet. For Mary *also* kept the house, and Martha *also* sat at Jesus' feet, though not in the same proportion of time and attention. These excesses of Martha's carefulness he will correct by his seasonable counsels, and he will encourage Mary's

devoutness by his loving word of approval. And Lazarus—he also was an object of Jesus' love. He was loved as a young man—as one of nearly his own age—and therefore of his close companionship, who was known therefore as one of his special favorites at Bethany.

Jesus loved *the sisters.*

Who says that this religion is good enough for the women? This is its highest encomium—that it comes home to the culture and refinement and tenderness of womankind. Woman was everywhere smiled upon and lifted up from her oriental degradation and blessed by him. He stood related to woman as he did not to man, as no other being did—with a human mother and no human father. No wonder that the women, all the way from Galilee, followed him in Judea and ministered to him of their substance. No wonder that the daughters of Jerusalem wept after him as he staggered under the weight of his cross. No wonder that the Marys were last at his cross, and first at his sepulchre.

I have seen the women of Italy carrying the *hod*, and worse, I have seen the women of Egypt and of Asia treated like beasts—no girls in the schools, no women in the mosques, as if they were not fit to be educated nor fit to worship God.

But the *Old Testament religion* honored the women. *Sarah* is on the list of Old Testament worthies, as a splendid example of faith; and *Deborah* was a prophetess and a leader of the people; and *Miriam* was a sweet singer of triumphal psalms; and *Han-*

*nah* was an honored mother, bringing her children to God; and *Ruth* was an elegant instance of devotion; and *Esther* was the beautiful, queenly petitioner, that saved her people by her patriotic prayers; and *Jael* was a heroine for Israel; and *Rahab* staked her all for their salvation. And in striking contrast with all these, there was one such woman as *Jezebel.*

And then, at Christ's coming, there was that good old *Anna*, the prophetess, who could always be seen in all weathers at church, all Sabbath time at public worship, and also through the week. And there was *Elizabeth*, who walked with her husband, Zacharias, in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord, blameless. Who, then, can wonder at such a record as this of our text—"Now Jesus loved *Martha, and her sister.*"

That wonderful mission of the Marys at the resurrection—how it rebuked the slowness, and apathy, and unbelief of the men; that assuring testimony that they had seen the angels, and had seen the Lord. And it was not only *then*, but often since in the Christian Church, that it has been written—"They found it, even as the *women* had said!"

The men can not always sympathize with woman's Christian work. They count it a weak enthusiasm, just as the apostles even counted the women's testimony from the sepulchre as idle tales and believed them not. The shepherds, next to the angels, were the first publishers of the advent. But the *women*, early in the morning, were the first

publishers of the resurrection and of our Christianity, as it is founded on the resurrection of Christ. What the apostles were commissioned to bear witness of, they *received first from the women.* And but for those rousing, burning words of the Marys, those ministers of Christ might have sat still in their discouragement and disbelief. What wonder that he showed himself first to Mary Magdalene!

Who does not see that woman has a heart for Christian work, an ardor and alacrity in the service of Christ which reveals a special affinity and makes us wonder no more at such a narrative. How we find them everywhere, whatever their household cares—patient, sympathizing, laborious, self-sacrificing—waiting upon the destitute, searching out the lost, pushing forward the great schemes of beneficence! How we find them rebuking the excuses of the men who plead their farms and merchandises! And while the *Marthas* might plead their housekeeping cares as well, how we see them early in the day disposing of these, and hurrying to the work of the Master! "Now *Jesus loved Martha, and her sister!*"

A woman, without work for Christ, is, therefore, without her proper occupation. A woman working for Christ, and sitting at the feet of Jesus, is the true ideal of womanhood. That apostolic woman, *Dorcas*, honored Joppa by her *good works*, as much as Peter honored it by his house-top prayers. What a record of her, that "she was full of good works, and alms-deeds that she did!" And when she died, there was a lamentation in the city, and the church

sent for an apostle to come thither and help them in their distress. And that upper chamber, where she was laid out for the burial, was crowded with the weeping widows, who "showed the coats and garments which this good woman had made, while she was with them." And no wonder that the apostle thought such a life too valuable to be lost, and exerted his miraculous gift to raise her up from the dead. The *Dorcases* are not all dead, blessed be God!

And she was a young woman, as her other name, "*Tabitha*," imports.

The young women of the church are not all given over to gaiety and *pleasure-seeking*, but some are eager to give their youth-time to Christ, and to deeds of Christian beneficence—teaching in the Sabbath-school, clothing the poor, and supplying the destitute, by their angelic ministries.

This is woman's mission—everywhere and always. These are *woman's rights* which belong to her by divine constitution, and which Jesus will vindicate in his church—the right of blessing, and being blessed. The woman *blessed among women*, is Mary, the virgin mother; and the woman whose praise is sung as *blessed above women*, is Jael, the wife of Heber the Kenite, driving the nails through the temples of the foe of Israel, and pinning the chieftain of the wicked to the ground.

And yet, I say, the *love of Jesus* is consistent with diversities of temper, and with defects of character.

"I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac,

and the God of Jacob"—Abraham, the faithful worker, Isaac, the patient sufferer, and Jacob, the cunning schemer. Martha's complaint to Christ against her sister was too much in the spirit of petulance and censoriousness to win his approbation; and it conveyed, also, an ungracious insinuation against his own love for herself—"*Dost thou not care that my sister hath left me to serve alone?*"

It is hard, indeed, to do laborious service, and see others idle or only occasionally at work. We find it hard to have the church enterprises rolled upon *us* alone, as if the more we do the more we ought to do. And some would seem to have some right to be impatient and fretful at the sluggishness and inefficiency of so many. But if we wait for all to be with us at service, we may wait forever and do nothing, because others will not do their part. But these are our infirmities, to relax our service because others are inactive, or to do our work under a protest against the *do-nothing* class in the church.

But Jesus loved *Martha*, even though, in a moment of complaining, she cast a reproach upon her sister and upon himself. What should any of us do, if Jesus could not love us, notwithstanding our defects and our unpleasant peculiarities? He loves us enough to administer his loving reproofs and corrections.

And *yet, further.* This love of Jesus is so personal, as to be fitly *pleaded in distress.*

The fact of Jesus' love is something so momentous and so precious, as to stand a man in stead,

when trouble comes. Be it loss of friends or loss of property or loss of health—whatever the sorrow, this love can be relied on, and mentioned, and made the basis of request for his presence and succor in the adversity.

How natural for these sisters to send word to Jesus, from the sick bed of Lazarus—"Lord behold he whom thou lovest is *sick.*" We know not what proof this suffering brother had ever given of his love to Christ. But this is not mentioned. It is not said, Behold he who *loves thee* is sick. No! That would not be the proper plea. The Scripture nowhere so presents it.

There is so much defect in our love to Christ, and it is so fickle and feeble in its best condition that it will not bear to be named as the ground of petition, even for a visit from Christ. *No.* It was the boasting Peter who said, "Though all men should forsake thee, yet will not I—though all should be offended, yet will not I." But John, the beloved disciple, boasted Jesus' love to *him*, and not his love *to Jesus*—and he gloried in the name of "*that disciple* whom *Jesus loved.*"

And now can we so appreciate this love of Christ as to feel its availability in our distress? Can we so substantiate it, as we do our human, earthly loves, in all their personality? Can we gather up for ourselves or for one another the proofs of Jesus' love to ourselves, so as to mention in his ear the simple fact, as a plea for his presence and assistance? Do we inquire for the daily proofs of his favor, so as to comfort ourselves with this endear-

ing relation, and make it our recourse in time of trouble? Can we enter at all into the triumphant language of the apostle—"Who shall separate us from the love of Christ"—from the personal love which he bears to us? No power in all the universe can do it, *for its preciousness* is above all price.

And yet, observe, this *love of Jesus finds responsive love in those who are its objects.*

Though Mary is one day sitting at his feet, seemingly inactive and inattentive to Martha's call, or to the table service, yet her record is beautiful, and her loving acts are referred to here in connection with Jesus' acts of love—"It was *that Mary* who anointed the Lord with ointment, and wiped his feet with her hair, whose brother Lazarus was sick." That act of rare devotion is rendered now, as a natural response to that foregoing love he had shown, when sorrow brooded over the household, and when her only brother was laid low upon his sick bed, and in the very jaws of death. Lazarus who had been dead—was he not now sitting at the table with them?

That anointing cost her an alabaster box of very precious ointment. It may have wrung from her heart a pang, at the time, to break it upon the head of this friend. It wrung from Judas, with his hypocritical cant, a *reflection* upon the prodigality that would throw so much money away upon a favorite, when it could have been given to the poor. But Judas hung himself, and Mary exalted her sex by her humble sacrifice before

God. That was her fond heart's offering—and had she not, already, gotten more than she gave—gotten back her dead brother from the sepulchre? And the Holy Ghost mentions her ointment and tears in this connection of Jesus' resurrection work, as if it were only the *responsive* love that ruled in these kindred hearts.

How many in the church are only *hoping*, upon the whole, to be saved; only enrolled in the membership, without ever having waked to the consciousness of Jesus' personal love; without ever having felt the sweet sense of his personal favor; without ever laying to heart the fact of pardoned sin; without ever dreaming of any such affection on his part as a mother's love, or a brother's; without ever trying to grasp the fact that he loves them by name—"Martha, Mary, Lazarus"—each and all! And it is just the lack of this apprehension of a great Gospel fact which cuts the nerves of individual exertion in the church, which brings so few Marthas to set Christ's table in the house, and so few Marys to break their costly perfume boxes upon Jesus' head.

And they who love Christ, and show the proofs of it in their living, are also proving to the world that Christ loves them. These are our only tangible proofs. It was the service done to Christ in that household at Bethany, which made every one who knew them aware of Christ's love to them. And so we know his love to Mary, by Mary's ointment poured upon his head; and his love to Martha, by Martha's generous spreading of his table;

and when all say that he loved Lazarus, we know that Lazarus must have done such loving acts as made him known at Bethany, as Jesus' friend—such acts as were the response and reflection of Jesus' love. This love of Jesus makes sunshine in the house that death itself can not long darken, and that no power in the universe can destroy.

But you doubt about the evidences of Christ's love to you. Come down to the child's simplicity.

"Jesus loves me, this I know,
For the Bible tells me so."

And if this is found in the Bible, why not gather up the documentary proofs—the title-deeds, and covenants, and bonds, that are written, signed and sealed here. And if it is true of you, then it is the most precious, most important fact in your existence. Then lay the fact to heart. Then live as one beloved of Jesus. Then send for him in trouble, tell him your wants, your complaints; tell him all the case, as friend with friend. And only remember that his love is *royal*. He loves to be laid under obligations. He loves to be relied on, pleaded with, confided in. Let his love be no more a mere doctrine, but a living reality.

# IX.

## THE MERCHANT SEEKING CHRIST AND SOUGHT BY HIM.

"And Jesus said unto him, This day is salvation come to this house, forasmuch as he also is a son of Abraham. For the Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which was lost."—LUKE xix. 9–10.

The mission of Jesus Christ to men is full of kindest advances for our salvation. If any are urged to seek him, it is chiefly with this encouragement—that he is seeking them, and has come for this purpose to seek and to save them that are lost. Before they can give a thought to the matter, he has already groaned under the curse of their sins, and has even died for them on the cross. This *foregoing love* is a grand, attractive fact that qualifies all our understandings of the Gospel.

So many, like the man of the one talent, are looking upon the terms of salvation as hard, impossible—regarding God as an austere man, and, out of their own narrowness of feeling, are attributing a greater narrowness to him. And they have no room for confidence even in his dying love! They forget that, when this planet of ours had broken away from the harmonious system of

worlds, there was no method for its recovery but that the grand laws of attraction be brought to bear upon it. Its own gravitation would carry it *down*, DOWN to the deepest depths of ruin. The very velocity with which it tore away would plunge it into remediless destruction.

And now, therefore, the law is, that no man can come back to God, *except by the* Father's drawings —that Christ, as he is lifted up, shall draw all men unto him. Hence, this is now the attractive system of providence and grace. The *message* is now the sweet, alluring offer of the Gospel—nay, more than an offer—the proclamation of peace, which only insists on acceptance. And the daily dealing is now the hand of kind constraint which works with every man in all his life.

There is not a man of you but has been thus plainly dealt with, for his drawing to God. Some of you have been prospered in business, and that was a most kind drawing. Others have been disappointed and baffled—perhaps utterly broken up —and that was a gentle constraining towards a better world.

How, then, are you interpreting your daily history? How are you understanding your gains and losses, your successes and reverses in the world?

If such be the explanation of your life's affairs, then surely this matter of your salvation is, with God at least, an omnipresent interest. But if this be his constant concern in you—nay, if this be the only accounting for your history on earth, that you have been kept under treatment rather than

banished long ago to despair, then you will grant this one point, that there is every encouragement and every inducement offered you to seek salvation.

There is a certain class who see nothing but difficulty in the way of their being saved—not indeed as regards God, but as regards themselves. They have not the requisites in their view. They have a kind of conviction, but it is not overpowering nor deep. They have a kind of belief in this Gospel, but it is not moving nor positive; and hence, they only see a great gulf fixed between themselves and heaven. There needs *feeling*, and they have not the right; there needs a present, pressing *motive* to seek Christ, and they have not the right; all that they have is hard-heartedness and infinite distance from Christ. And if they are ever to be saved, they imagine it must be by some mysterious, overpowering impulse—they know not how or whence. Others, they believe, have been brought to salvation, *not by thinking* on their ways —applying themselves to the Gospel message, and turning their feet to God's testimonies—not in any such calm, sober, rational manner, but by sudden and strange workings in them, which could neither be explained nor resisted.

But is salvation, then, all a mere lottery, a casualty or fatality? Can so momentous an interest have been left to the mere chances of such a blind occurrence? Has God proposed to men this great redemption, and yet not brought it at all within their reach?

The question is here solved by a case in hand!

How Christ *meets* men in his mission of grace—how the acquaintance is made between a sinner and the Saviour, and how wonderfully this salvation *comes home* to every man, anticipating his first inquiry, suiting every necessity, overcoming every difficulty, so as to be the most immediately accessible and available to any seeking soul—all this is illustrated by a living instance in this history.

It was in the last week of our Lord's career on earth, and on his last journey to Jerusalem. Jericho, the city of palm-trees and of stirring business, was specially astir that day, because of this unusual procession that passed through the streets. Among them the citizens could distinguish a poor blind beggar, whose eyesight had just been given him by the divine wonder-worker there; and that Bartimeus, glad and grateful, was shouting after Jesus, and others were gathering to the throng.

Business had its claims there as it has here. But there was a chief merchant of Jericho whom no claims of worldly business could keep back that day from following after this Son of God. He was a custom-house officer, but what of that? He was even a chief among these odious publicans, and he was rich—likely enough had gotten rich by his extortions as a tax-gatherer. But all that shall not hinder him now from seeking Jesus. The result will show that this merchant was no loser by quitting the custom-house that day, and letting go all his questions of tariffs and taxes and trade, his invoices and receipts and commissions, and giving up his time and his bargains to look after

that Jesus, who was so soon to be welcomed as his guest and Saviour.

Christ is here an applicant for the sinner's hospitality—asks for admittance to the publican's house. He only seeks to put himself under these pleasant obligations, just to institute personal acquaintance, just to open a familiar intercourse. He asks the man to entertain him, just that under this invitation of himself, he may put forward his own gracious invitation to his own house on earth and in heaven.

We call your attention, then, to this statement of Christ's gracious mission, as avowedly illustrated by the case of Zaccheus. Here is the business-man seeking Christ, and finding Christ seeking him—"This day is salvation come to this house, forasmuch as he also is a son of Abraham. For the Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which was lost."

Observe, first of all, *how inadequate were this man's views of Christ* at the outset *of this matter*. Indeed his ignorance was complete and confessed. He sought to see Jesus, who he was. But this is the Gospel exhortation—"Behold the Lamb of God." What if, like some who hear me, he had waited until he should have some special discoveries of Christ, he knew not whence; some inward revelations of him that should irresistibly captivate and constrain, he knew not how. It was just because he did not know who he was, that he would take some present opportunity of seeing him.

Is not this a point from which any man here

could fairly start out in the matter of his salvation? What if, like this rich publican, he should find himself so speedily drawn into the very company of Christ, and into the mighty currents of that whirlpool of his love, and Christ sitting with him, the same day, at his own table—the Saviour wonderfully a guest in his own house! Are you to wait for something—for any thing—in the way of views and discoveries, which you have not this moment? Is there need of any such delay? Is there a chasm here which needs first to be filled up, or bridged over, by some mighty movement of God, before you can take a step in the way of seeing Jesus? You may protest to all our urgencies that you have no adequate views of Christ as yet, and so you can not start. We know you have not. But this is the very motive for your seeking him—at least to see who he is; for your making some becoming inquiry into his word and work.

Is he the Creator of these heavens and this earth, and you know him not? Is it he that has peopled the upper worlds with angels, and this globe with all its inhabitants, and you care not to know who he is? Has he been so long time with you in his church, in the Gospel, and yet you know him not? Though you have learned to lisp his name from infancy, are you ignorant of him still?

If there could be one Person of the Blessed Trinity greater to us than another, it is he! He is not only God, but man also! He has not only the throne of the universe, but the Mediator's throne of grace besides. He is not only Jehovah, but

he is Judge also. And he is not only Lord, but Saviour!

And though you are this moment blind to all his attributes, and though you have no conception of him that could charm you at all; say at least, that you will, the rather, on this very account, seek a sight of him. No inadequate views of Christ could be a reason for your delay, but all the rather a reason for your promptest action. And it is just because you never yet rose to any such inquiry, never yet took the first earnest step towards a discovery of him, and for this object, that you sit in ignorance and darkness still.

But observe, *secondly*, *how inadequate* were this man's *feelings and motives at the outset.*

You wait for proper feelings, for some strange, miraculous movement in you, something that shall strike you down with terror, or dazzle you with light; some evident arrest and seizure of the Almighty hand, unaccountable and unreasonable. You are sitting under all the voices from Calvary, and all the calls from heaven itself, as though nothing had come to you as yet. When you think of your being converted, you know not how to compass it, nor how to promote it, because you see not how you can work these feelings in you, which you deem prerequisite; and here you sit, like the impotent man at the pool of Bethesda, for years together, as though Jesus had never passed this way, when he dwells here, and here delights to cure.

Whence has such a prevalent fallacy arisen in the human mind? What an arch delusion of Sa-

tan, to make men believe that they have yet to sit waiting for the Christ, like a blinded Jew who waits for the Messiah! So in the garden he contradicted the threatening, and said, "Ye shall not surely die." And here under the Gospel, at the gate-way of the new paradise, he countervails the promise, and says, "Ye shall not surely live!" He tempts the atheist to say, "There is no God;" and conscience whispers, that the very tongue that utters it, is a piece of mechanism whose mute but resistless testimony contradicts the lie! So he tempts you to say, "There is no Saviour;" and these sanctuaries, and Scriptures, and sacraments utter the testimony of long generations to rebuke the dreadful falsehood.

Could you not at least inquire honestly, earnestly, who he is? This man was moved, it would seem by the merest curiosity. At most his mind was open to conviction. General impressions that he had, or common report that he had heard, led him to seek a *view* of Christ—not even an *interview* with him. He had no thought of following him as a disciple. The lowest desire, the very lowest point of interest, was his. *You* would have held back, though it were in the matter of your soul's salvation, because these were not as yet the right feelings, nor the proper motives in approaching Christ.

But see how a man can set out in this matter, with all his ignorance, and get that ignorance enlightened; how he can seek a sight of Christ at least from quite inadequate motives, and with

most unworthy feelings, and be met, and more than met, by the Divine Saviour.

Must it not needs be so? Whoever started in this matter with right views, or out of any righteous affections? For then Christ had already been found, and the great work of the Spirit of Christ had been needless.

Could not any man here start this moment from this low point and find himself like this chief publican, speedily in the closest companionship with Christ—his understanding enlightened, his heart opened, his house honored by Christ's presence, the father of a family welcoming Christ to his utmost hospitality, and Christ pronouncing the blessing at his domestic board?

Could not these men who have long sat under the Gospel, move at once in this matter, without waiting for something—they know not what—and find this great business of the soul done for them, and in them, to their everlasting salvation? Could not these almost Christians succeed as well as this publican? To say that something is in the way, and to conceive that this Gospel message is not to you as you are, but only to you as you ought to be, is to nullify this grace, and to make a fatal mistake. It had as well be any other falsity. You had as well be counting the Scriptures untrue, or be dreaming that there is no eternity, no judgment, no Jesus Christ, no heaven nor hell. "Then shall ye know, if ye follow on to know the Lord."

But observe, *thirdly, how sudden was the change in this man.*

How long did it take him to be a Christian that day; or the jailor at the prison door in the night; or the Samaritan woman at noon at the well; or Lydia, at the river-side at evening, in the place of prayer? From being a mere spectator, gazing at this wondrous personage as he passed by, he came to be an acquaintance, a friend, a follower. The same day of his utter ignorance and distance, he found himself entertaining Christ as a guest, under his own roof, and having him sit at his own table, and cheerfully acknowledging his claims—and his heart already moved to new purposes of living, and new ideas of integrity and duty.

He was rich before in this world's goods. But now he had suddenly another kind of riches, which made the fine gold dim in itself, yet in regard to its use and in the light of Christ's love, gave it a new lustre as to be employed in his service; made him talk of giving half his hoarded goods to the poor; made him at once profess Christ as King no less than Prophet and Priest to him. And all this great, radical, practical change in a day—in an hour.

He was a man in high station before. He held a post of monetary trust and was chief in the office, yet his was a most thorough conversion. He arose now to newness of life. You can see that the whole cast of the man was altered. And this important business-man renounced the world's idolatries and the publican's extortions, and launched out upon a new career—a career of usefulness, of liberality, and of Christian discipleship.

But you know not what mighty convulsion can ever work such an important change in yourself. You can not conceive how it could ever be reached. You imagine yourself somehow excluded from this grace at present, or that it belongs to some other and privileged class. But Zaccheus, though a despised publican, and probably enough a Roman oppressor, was now, in Christ's view, a son of Abraham, and an Israelite indeed. You think of your salvation, either as a kind of miracle that must be like that of the quaking earth and rending rocks at the crucifixion, for which, therefore, you have only to *wait;* or you look upon it as a most formidable, discouraging work of your own, which you have not the heart to undertake. You can not think of it, except as the most far-off and inaccessible result. All this mistake about the work of seeking Christ arises from a misconception of Christ's work in seeking men.

We say then, first of all, that his redeeming work for sinners is *already complete.*

It is not as though he had yet another death to die for which you must tarry, nor as though the benefits of his death were, as yet, inaccessible to you, because of something which he has left undone. The redemption is wrought out. And what is the Gospel message, but the tidings of this?

And yet it is to you, as though no news had come; or as though it were nugatory because of something lacking to make it good and available to men. Hence you are laboring, without rope or bucket, to draw water from this deep well, when

Christ is pressing the cup of water to your very lips. You do not consider what has been already and actually achieved for your salvation, nor how complete an atonement has been made, nor how perfect a provision altogether has been furnished. You do not reflect on the glorious perfection of him who has undertaken this. You do not see the explicitness of the offer as it is recorded here by the Spirit. When you are urged to seek Christ, you do not think of it as an encouraging summons to accept salvation, but as a severe and cold command to do an impossible work; and for this very mistake of supposing a bridgeless gulf between you and this grace, you sit still, you dismiss the matter as impracticable for you; or, at least, as out of the question *now!* And all the good news that ought to have charmed your heart to hear falls dead upon you, as though it were a proposal to buy heaven for a million pounds, when you have not a farthing to give, nor any possible resources.

You can never go forward in this matter without starting out; you can never get light nor peace in Christ, except in the way of Christian duty. His cures come to you in the shape of commands: "Rise, take up thy bed and walk:" "Stretch forth thine hand." So he said to the lepers, "Go show yourselves to the priests and offer the gift which Moses commanded." He bade them to go forward, just as though they were already healed—"and as they went, they were healed."

But in your neglect to seek Christ, there is also,

*secondly*, an utter misconception of Christ's peculiar work in *seeking sinners!*

The text declares this to be his very object in all his mission of grace to our earth, to seek and to save the lost. If so, it is the single explanation of all these Gospel messages to you, of all these means of grace, of all the truth delivered, of all the providences dealt out to you. If so, it is true—astonishingly, touchingly true—that Christ has long been out seeking *you*, using constraints to *draw* you, variously working to *lead* you; and there is not a single item in all the vast array of his dispensations towards you, but is so to be understood. This would seem our only accounting for your respite upon earth, for your prolonged lives and opportunities.

Are you, then, idly waiting for something more? For WHAT? For Christ to move? He *has moved* the heavens and the earth for this; he has moved with groans and blood up the crucifixion hill for this; he has moved in all the checkered traces of your history, just for this! You can not say but you have manifold drawings, and have resisted them all; you can not say, but again, this holy hour, Christ brings you here in his providence, and accosts you with his word of grace, for this. And what wait you for? Does not all this bring the matter home to you? Have you the warrant for any delay? When there is all urgency from the hand that would save you, are you sitting, waiting for the heavens to open, and the Saviour *to die again?* If any amount of completion could put

Christ's work within your reach, for its immediate avail, it could not be more complete than it is now. And if any winning, inviting aspect of the matter could encourage you to move at once, and take action upon it, is it not enough that he came in all this wondrous mission of grace, for this express object, to seek out and to save the lost? Is it no encouragement to a lost child to seek his father, if he can know that his father is actually seeking him? Did not the prodigal's doubting, shivering heart leap with a bursting emotion when, in the far distance, he caught the first glimpse of his injured but loving parent, running to embrace him? Or where there has been rupture, is it no incentive to seek reconciliation, that already you are sought, for this very purpose; and that already the offended party is proclaimed as reconciled?

Then why not move at once in this matter, at least to see Jesus, who he is. What if you should find him actually inquiring for you, and what if the first salutation is his voice, calling you as if by *name*, and welcoming you to all he has to give? Tell us what this publican, more curious than righteous at first, saw or heard now, that brought him so into close connection with Christ? What was it but that he heard Christ *call*, heard Christ calling *him*—calling him by *name*, so that he could not mistake its reference to himself; calling him to come down and entertain him, at his house?

And such a call, only a thousand times repeated, you have had from your first moment of discretion.

What more can you ever have? You wait for some louder call? Is it to be in the thunder, or earthquake, or death itself, or the last trumpet's sound? Have you not heard him say, "Come unto me and I will give you rest:"—"*Come! Follow me!*"—"Give me thy heart:"—"Come, for all things are now ready:"—"Open unto me, and I will come into you and sup with you, and you with me"? Is there *any thing* to be waited for? Should you not now, at once, admit Christ and entertain him, and rejoice in him?

But that this is so, will appear also, *thirdly*, from the very *terms* in which the call of Christ is made to you. Because it is addressed to *all*, to *every one*, to *whosoever will;* it is addressed to yourself, this moment, as truly and as much as to any other creature under heaven; as personally as if you were called by name. And what is it, but *come!* It is a free, unconditioned invitation to all the benefits. It is not pay and come, or promise and come, or perform good works and come, or make new hearts and come, but come first of all, now and at once, without any delay. Come sinners—needy, helpless, lost—*come!* Come as you are and be saved!

*This* is Christ's work—to save sinners. This very lost estate of yours has brought out Christ, seeking you, seeking sinners such as you, and none but such. He seeks the lost. It is his glory and delight to receive you—miserable, sinful, lost as you are. And if there were the least to *pay*, you could not pay it. If there were the least to *do*

acceptably, you could not do it. If there are prerequisites and conditions of good feeling or good works, this utterly vitiates the matter for sinners, and makes it all an idle offer to you.

But what do we hear in the Gospel. It is "come to the waters." Whatever is here flows as freely and as fully as the fountain streams, running over and gushing up from their deep eternal bed. You mistake the Gospel provision by supposing that instead of furnishing "all things that pertain to life and godliness," it requires the first holy acts to be of yourselves. He gives holy desire; he gives Christian faith; he gives true repentance; he gives whatever is needful. He treats you as lost. And you must come as you are, to get whatever you require, from first to last. No matter even what brings you to Christ; no matter about the style of coming, so that you come to him as the only Saviour.

Look now at the history of this new-made acquaintance that has brought a man at once to such a change of all his relations and destinies. It is given to the life as an avowed illustration of seeking Christ, and of Christ seeking and saving the lost.

All that need be said in the book of truth about the nature of his first inquiry, is this—that this chief publican, ignorant altogether of Christ except from the common fame, sought to see Jesus, who he was. Difficulties presented themselves; but he had risen to this simple resolution that he would press through the crowd and climb up, if

need be, to see him. He put himself in the path of Christ, of course, yet seeking only a view of him as yet, rather than an interview. And he found that Christ was seeking him, was already reading his secret feeling, was more than meeting his first desire. He knew him at last only by that personal revelation of himself—that Christ knew him first—called him now by name. All that you can say of the man is, that then and there, before he had uttered a word, he heard Christ calling, calling him to come, and he came down at once; made haste and came down.

Christ bespoke his hospitality (amazing condescension!) asked to be a guest at his house, cared not only for himself, but for his family also, and the man *received Christ joyfully*. No wonder! No man of all that crowd could sneer at this publican for welcoming Christ. But all wondered that Christ had gone to be guest with a man that was a sinner. That publican's house was made happy that same hour. Christ crossed that threshold and said, "Peace be to this house." That man's table was honored by Christ's presence; his lot was enriched by Christ's blessing. Christ declared to the man, that that day salvation had come to his dwelling. The convert found his whole soul warmed towards the Saviour, and changed in all its relations and resolutions. He is ready to profess Christ; he does it on the spot, and under his own roof he repeats it. An altar to Christ is set up there; he has new plans of living and of well-doing.

What now shall be the history of this case? He did not even knock to have it opened to him, half so much as Christ was found knocking at his door, and he opened to *him*. Zaccheus ran before the crowd; but Christ had run before Zaccheus. The man was called on by the heavenly guest to entertain him at his home. But oh! he found himself the most entertained. He welcomed Christ, but he found himself more welcomed. The father of a household just opened to the Saviour, and lo! the Saviour had come in to him to sup with him, and he with Christ, and his family were blessed by such a visitant. Oh, what a day was that to this publican and sinner! Who had thought that his first starting out, in all his ignorance and prejudice, and sin, that hour, would have led to such amazing and glorious results that very day.

My hearers, do you tell me that you wait for something in this matter of seeking Christ? You ought to know the Gospel message and Christ's office-work well enough to be pressing through the crowd, or coming down from where you are posted along the way. You ought to make haste and come down, and receive him joyfully. Where have you climbed up now to see him? "Blessed sycamore! by which Zaccheus climbed that day to heaven!" You have the means of grace at hand. The Gospel word is nigh thee. While you pray and complain that you find no answers, the answers are here already in the Scripture, fresh as though they came this moment from the skies. You look for a sign from heaven that shall assure

you, so as to dispense with all exercise of *trust*. You will have sight, and not faith. You can not help knowing that Christ calls you now, before you ever call to him. You can not help hearing him speaking directly to yourself as if by name, even along the road-side. And if you would respond to him like this chief merchant of Jericho, and entertain this Saviour in your heart and at your home, you too would find him abiding at your house to-day with his great salvation.

# X.

## TEARFUL SOWING AND JOYFUL REAPING.

"They that sow in tears, shall reap in joy. He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him."—PSALM cxxvi. 5–6.

The Psalmist celebrates in this beautiful psalm the return of the church from captivity by help of her covenant God. How joyous was the day! How bright and blessed was the deliverance! It was morning after midnight. It was plenty after famine. It was rain after drought. And from such a glad and happy experience he deduces a great principle, applicable to all times and to the church, not only, but to the individual believer. "They that sow in tears, shall reap in joy."

But this principle can not be of universal application. It is confined to the domain of Christian effort. Traced to the natural law, we could say that they who undertake and prosecute enterprises with anxious earnestness, such as often expresses itself in tears, do commonly meet with success, and obtain a joyous harvest of their anxious sowing.

But this is, by no means, the universal experience. Every one sees that many sow in tears and reap in tears also. See the man of the world, early and late busy, carrying on the service of

mammon with sweating toil worthy of a better cause; wearied in body and mind, worried and exhausted, sitting down at last to disappointment and despair. Oh! How the masses who forget God and go in pursuit of worldly pleasure, or of mad ambition, sow in tears and reap in bitter weeping!

The service of Satan and of mammon is a hard service, drudging work and poor wages. Pity on the toiling laborers who have no rest, day nor night; no release from their bondage and no fruit of their labor, but shame and sorrow; where they drudge on, and are only crushed and cursed for their pains by the hard master whom they serve.

There is no service but the service of God, that guarantees a splendid success. Think of this, ye who give body and soul to the cares of life and to its pleasures, and find your reward so hard and cruel, with no promise of relief forever and ever. Listen to those cheering words of the text and inquire for this Master, who promises such joyous and blessed returns in his service.

It may be fairly said, that there is no great result in life attained without hard labor. Men concede this every day in their worldly business. They are even willing to sow in tears at the prospect, however uncertain, of reaping, at length, in joy. There is ready sacrifice, daily self-denial, cheerful cross-bearing, patient bondage, to the work of mammon, in the bare hope of gaining, at length, an ample return.

And yet, how hard it is, sometimes, for such to

bear up under the blasted prospects and baffled efforts in business, with no security that it will ever be otherwise. But here, in the service of God, the sower can well afford the tears; he can bear up cheerfully under the present burdens, knowing that there shall surely come an abundant harvest —that none of his patient, painstaking labor shall be lost, that he shall yet go forth to the reaping, however it be long delayed, and that,

> "Though seed lie buried long in dust,
> It sha'n't deceive the hope.
> The precious grain shall not be lost,
> For grace insures the crop."

There are divine maxims that the world quotes for its encouragement, but they belong to the people of God, that—"The darkest hour is just before the day," and that "man's extremity is God's opportunity." The Scripture has it, as it was written in the history of Abraham. "In the mount the Lord shall be seen." The altar on which your Isaac is to be given up in tears to God, is the place where you shall behold marvels of God's mercy—where God shall graciously interpose, and all angels shall seem to be your bodyguard, and unimagined ways of deliverance shall appear to turn the weeping into joy.

So it is written, on the basis of the same divine guarantees, and as a fruit of the same Christian experience: "Blessed is the man whose strength is in thee; in whose heart are the ways of them, who, passing through the valley of Baca, make it a well." I have seen stout men and tender women

passing through the valley of Baca, and the vale of weeping becomes to them a fountain of living waters, and God's gracious rains from heaven—all his showers of blessing—fill the pools which affliction has scooped out in their path.

Let us look now at the text, as it sets before us the certain results of Christian effort—the sure success of labor in Christ's service, however toilsome, and however discouraging, or disappointing it may any time appear.

Every man is in a sense a husbandman, whether he will or not. He is daily sowing seed that shall spring up to some harvest of honor and joy, or of shame and sorrow. But the Christian minister and every Christian laborer is likened, in the Scripture, to a sower—who goes forth to sow, whose business and office-work is this—to sow seed. The illustration is full of interest. Let us trace it out.

The dissemination of God's truth is our great business—yours and mine, my brethren.

And this divine truth, when brought to bear upon men, is compared, in Scripture, to a fire and a hammer, that breaks the flinty rock in pieces. This is its function—this is its office-work and aim—to break down the stoutest enmity of the heart. It is also likened to a sword that is to be wielded—to strike down the most violent opposer—the sword of the Spirit, which God, the Holy Ghost himself draws—and with which he cuts, even to the joints and marrow of the desperate foe.

But in the hand of the Christian minister, and

Christian member, this truth of God is also seed. And thus it is called the good seed—the incorruptible seed, which liveth and abideth forever. Other seed may utterly rot in the ground, as it fairly ought; and some seed may germinate to corruption; but this seed never rots, and where it springs up, at length, it is always to a pure and joyous harvest.

Mark, then, the divine encouragement: "He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him." The sole condition of the success is, that the sower shall go forth to his work, *bearing the* precious seed, and then, he may go forth even weeping, for the present hardship or opposition or ill-success, but he shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, reaping his golden harvest.

Look now at this truth of God as seed.

Jesus spake a parable to this effect, and said, "The sower soweth *the* WORD." The seed is the word of God. You may notice how these divine truths are thrown out from the pulpit and the press and social conversation, as from the sower's hand.

Is this to be the end of all this constant work of the preacher, just to pronounce formal sermons —just to work up thoughts into religious discourses, or to work out the high problems of divine revelation, for curious hearers, and to go on to-morrow as to-day, and next Sabbath as this Sabbath, looking for no further results? Ask: Is it

the whole business of the husbandman to turn his mellow furrow and plant his field with grain—and so go on, with the same process, year after year, looking for no harvest? Oh no! This might be, if he sowed *pebbles*. But he has sowed *seed*. And, in its very nature, it is a germ—having life—and it is expected to be started into growth by all the system of influences into which it is cast by that act of the sower flinging it into the ground.

Look at these truths of God. They are living germs—they are seed-grain. They are cast out into the minds of men in the hope of genial influences for expanding and maturing them to a harvest. Oh! how one thought, flung into the active soul, has often germinated and expanded and come up with rank stalk and heavy crop in all the future life.

And that is what we seek. And this is what God expressly promises: "As the rain cometh down and the snow from heaven, and returneth not thither, but watereth the earth, that it may give seed to the sower and bread to the eater; so shall my word be, that goeth forth out of my mouth. It shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please; and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it, that instead of the thorn may come up the fir-tree, and instead of the brier the myrtle-tree, to be to the Lord for a name, for an everlasting sign which shall not be cut off." This is the absolute guarantee of God. And this is the standing encouragement in disseminating this good word of God. So it ought

to result—so every sowing ought to have its crop, and will somehow and sometime have it, in benefit and blessing for all eternity.

But observe the grand condition of this success is, that the seed sown shall be *precious* seed.

Oh! how many hands are busy sowing worthless seed, that shall either not spring up or, what is worse, shall spring up to prolific harvests of corruption and perdition. How the new laborers, with seed in hand—bad seed—enter the service of Satan every day! And how hard it is to get men, in this blessed field of the Master, men who will be earnest and faithful in scattering the good seed of the kingdom, as they go along in life with a view to a harvest of souls!

But look at this seed,—how precious! You can know it only from its fruits. You may take various seeds—some of most poisonous plants, and some of richest fruits—and you may not be able to distinguish them. But drop them into the ground, where they shall be subjected to the appropriate influences of soil, and you shall soon know them from the stalk and leaf even, but surely from the fruit.

Take now one of these divine truths—the great fact of the Gospel—the faithful, credible saying, so worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners. Have I need to prove to you how precious is this seed-grain of inspired truth? Have you not seen it where it has sprung up in a desolate field, where the heart was sad and the home was cheerless,

and it has gladdened all around—comforted the sorrowing, and raised the degraded and debased —as when you have sown some gorgeous flower-seed in your garden, and it has bloomed all the season through, to delight and bless with its beauty every beholder?

I saw, for the first time, last summer, in this vicinity, the evening primrose. They who had the beauteous thing in bloom, near the door-way of their dwelling, gathered the whole company of visitors around to see it so wondrously open its flowers at the instant of the sunsetting. We stood and watched the long yellow blossoms that had been folded up closely through the day—and strangely enough, as the sun went down, these blossoms on every stem seemed instinct with life. The folded leaves began to stir, and first one and then another leaf gently unfolded, until, presently, it flung open all its beauty to the beholder. And not one of the blossoms failed to do the same, until a dozen on the same stalk stood forth in the glory of this twilight resurrection. A precious seed, I said, is that, and I must have the joy of such a planting and flowering.

So I have seen it, in a circle of worshippers, or in the same household. What precious seed has the great Gospel truth of Jesus' advent for sinners' salvation proved to be! What peace it has brought forth in the bosom! What solid principle! What noble practice! How it has burst forth in beauty on a whole circle of beholders—a garden of delights—like the most rare and fra-

grant blossoming of the tropics. How faith and hope and love and joy and peace and long-suffering and gentleness and goodness and meekness and temperance and truth have been gathered by a whole household, in richest clusters, as the crop from this one seed.

And so there is another precious seed, the truth of a divine covenant with the believer through Jesus Christ covering all providence—controlling all issues and events—numbering the very hairs of the head—providing for the asking and the receiving, as by a law more fixed than that which moves the stars in their exactest courses. See how this seed, sown in the heart, springs up and yields a fruit of happy thoughts and rich consolations!

Then as nothing can happen unforeseen and unordered and unprovided for by my covenant God, is it not blessed at the worst? Is it not part of my training for heaven, and part of my leading thither? And so, if the event cross my plans, do I want any thing for myself that my covenant God does not want me to have? Or do I know better than he what is best for me? Is it not better for my own happiness and for my eternal salvation, that my poor, stumbling way be embarrassed than his eternal course of love? Is it not better that my poor, blind will be disappointed, than his loving and glorious counsels? And so let the tribulation come, and it shall work patience, and the patience experience, and the experience hope.

And so, finally, the truth of the resurrection and

eternal life is a like precious seed. Springing up in the dreariest bosom, it sheds joy around; it is fragrant with perfume that fills the air.

Yesterday, I buried an aged widow, who first received me into her hospitable home a quarter century before, when I went out a lad to do my first sowing of the Gospel seed. She was one of my earliest parishioners in a distant city. She came to her grave in a full age as a shock of corn cometh in in his season. It was a seasonable death, calm and beautiful, at eighty-seven years of age. And her last words were—"Eternal life! eternal life!"

That seed, planted in her mind—this truth of the "life eternal"—that single glorious truth let fall in her soul—was vitalized and expanded to a gracious maturity and developed in her all joy and triumph, in her long and happy life journey and in her victorious death. So you have seen it all through your society. And to see it spring up, in even a few instances, is an ample reward.

But the text makes mention of the weeping, almost as if it were a condition of success.

There are manifold occasions for tears in this sower's work. The promise is spoken for encouragement, under all possible disappointments and drawbacks. As Jesus himself portrayed the sowing in his beautiful parable, you remember, it was only in one condition out of four, that the seed, precious as it all was, came to a blessed harvest. And yet we might hope that more than a fourth of all the seed sprang forth to perfection—that

most of all the seed sown was dropped into the good ground, and only here and there a few scattering seeds fell by the wayside or upon the rock or among the thorns. But the manifold hindrances to the growth of the word in the heart and life might make an angel weep.

It is hard for a minister to see the loss of his labor, in case of the wayside hearers. Hard to see a thousand birds of ill-omen, flocking round, to pick up the precious seed which has received no lodgement on that hard trodden road. Hard to see men, so indurated by the rush and tramp of business or pleasure, that you can't get them so much as to think of the soul. These great truths, most solemn and momentous, scarcely dropped before they are gone! Men who come, and go as they came, from a thousand sermons, and no impression is received! Oh! it is that which brings the tears. And then it is hard, where the seed has even sprung up and blossomed, full of promise, to find, in a few short months, how it has revealed its rocky soil—no firm rooting—all going to stalk —nothing but leaves—the blossoms dropping off without any fruit—nothing matured and ripened to perfection—withered away! And then, too, to see the growing of the seed choked by thorns—by the cares of this world and by the deceitfulness of riches and by the lusts of other things. So much good seed falling on rich soil, but overrun by weeds and overtopped by thistles, till it can grow no more, but is buried under the rank mass of worldliness. Oh! this is matter for tears; these

are sights, under our daily eye, to wring the sower's heart with anguish.

You do not see the weeping. How the evil tempers and evil example of some in the church hinder the progress of young Christians, or hinder others from becoming Christians at all! How we must weep over much inconsiderate conduct even in the best; over mischievous principles broached by good men, where wrong is palliated by those who are set to be the promulgators and defenders of the right, and where all a pastor's efforts are paralyzed by men of standing in the church, who openly, in conduct or otherwise, advocate the wrong in daily practice.

But we are bidden to go on sowing, even though we weep as we go. For first, the sowing is ours and the weeping may be ours, but not the germinating, nor the fruit-bearing of what we sow. "Paul planteth, Apollos watereth, but God giveth the increase."

And this is just what God doeth and delights to do, as if it were by a system of natural law. The means are ours—the results are his. And yet, he will often so bless the means with the results, as that they shall seem to have produced them. So, he often honors the preaching of the word and the use of all Christian instrumentalities. But he has not required of us to make the seed grow, only to do the sowing faithfully, and even at self-sacrifice and with tearful efforts, that shall evince the earnestness and the fidelity. And he will ensure the gracious harvest.

But we are to consider, secondly, that God does not bind himself to times and seasons for this harvest.

It is not in the church, as it is in nature, that we can tell of the harvest-time from the course of the sun in the sky or from the season of the year. He reserves to himself the time for the reaping. Nay, it is often that one soweth and another reapeth.

But God will have our patience tested and cultivated here. And then he will have it so arranged that he that soweth and he that reapeth may rejoice together. Oh! in the other world, we shall see the map of human influences and destinies spread out in our individual cases, and it will appear whose sowing it was from which the harvest, in each case, was finally reaped. And many an one who had waited and wept long time for results in his ministry will be honored, at last, with bringing in the sheaves from his own sowing, however long ago past; and then, if not before, that eternity that shall disclose all actions and all issues and shall trace them to their respective sources shall put the honor upon those to whom it is due. And they who, years ago, went forth sowing and toiled faithfully in the furrow and scattering the seed, but not knowing of the ultimate results, they shall come again, with rejoicing, and shout the harvest-home. Patience, Christian parents, pray and labor with your wayward children. "God giveth the increase." This is what he does—God giveth the increase. Patience, Sabbath-school teacher, plant and water.

And if this be so, then we remark, further, that present success in this work is no criterion of fidelity or of God's favor.

What if a man sits down in his field, discouraged because he does not see the seed spring up at once. Many will give up the work, if they have not the immediate returns. But the husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth and hath long patience for it, until he receive the early and the latter rain. God's times are not ours, nor are his ways ours. And can we not afford to wait when the promise is absolute, as in the text? Yea, the farmer may sow the best seed and may wait in vain for the crop. Nature has not supplied all the conditions of fertility and production. And hence he goes, mourning the barrenness and loss. But here, in Christ's service, no Christian labor shall ever lose its reward. It is only a question of time. The faithful sower shall, doubtless—*doubtless*—come again with rejoicing, with his arms and bosom full of the sheaves.

There is a world beyond; and it is a world of wages and fruits and issues and results and recompenses. If the seed has not yet sprung up, there it is, in the furrow, we may hope. It is sown in the bosom, and it is incorruptible seed. And if it be longer a-coming, it may be only because it was deeper planted or because of the nature of the soil. The century plant blooms for those who did not plant the seed. Yes! And so there were those who planted that precious seed in faith, though they knew it should open its gorgeous flower, not

for their eyes, but for others—when their heads were laid low in the dust.

I met a former parishioner in the crowd of Broadway, last week. It had been nearly twenty years since I had seen him. He told me of his children—one dead, another in Europe, another at home. He grasped me by the hand as we parted and he said: "Ah, you will be remembered by your people in Brooklyn, long after your head is in the grave." Ah! that is wages: the like of which one may get every year, more or less, from the old field, while he gathers also from the new. The husbandman hath long patience for the precious fruit of the earth—*long patience* for it. And why not we for this more precious fruit of heaven, when we are assured that it shall certainly come?

And, finally, we see it is not the ministry, alone, but *the membership*, also, to whom this sowing belongs.

They who have the seed are to scatter it. There is no monopoly of production. You may all be cultivators of this gracious crop. No matter what discouragement or what delay or doubt or opposition of men or hindrances of the world or of the devil—no matter though Satan plant tares over night among the wheat, which you have carefully sown and watered with your tears. It is God's to give the increase, even where Paul plants and Apollos waters. And therefore, every one who can cast a seed out into the field, is invited to this work. Here is the call for truth, in every form of dissemination, to be written, spoken, said,

or sung—at home or by the way—to men and to children—in the church and the Sabbath-school and the counting-room—at the table and in the social circle—by the formal teaching or the incidental remark—by the sober counsel or the tender rebuke or the word of invitation or admonition. *Speak!* I pray you, my brother; whatever of God's truth you have at hand that the occasion calls for—that you have the opportunity to dispense—speak out! for that truth has life in it—spirit and life—and it can not be utterly tramped out of the bosom. The fowl of the air may pick it up from the way-side, but may drop it elsewhere—may even drop it into a fresh furrow. And it will grow, ages after it has passed from your hand. Just as the seed deposited in the mummy's coffin is found, after long ages, yet instinct with life and incorruptible.

Oh! ye who are out in the field of life daily, amidst the open furrows, where some sowing is all the while going on, and you are busily sowing some seed, whether you know it or not, whether you will it or not, sow this good seed of the kingdom, I beseech you, wherever you can. Employ your talents for Christ. Use your opportunities for Christ. Undertake work for Christ. It is no time for shrinking and shirking the work of the Master. Have you not served Satan faithfully and the world and self; and will you beg off from toil and denial in Christ's service? Only think of the sheaves which you may bring home, at the great harvesting of the world! Even though you are

obscure and without influential position in society, remember, God asks for the sowing and he will give the increase, whether it be your sowing or Paul's or Gabriel's or a child's or an idiot's.

> "I say to thee, do thou repeat
> To the first man thou mayst meet,
> In lane, highway or open street,
> That he and we and all men move
> Under a canopy of love,
> As broad as the blue sky above."

And then let no one say that this is work which is *too hard.*

> "A grain of corn an infant's hand
> May plant upon an inch of land,
> Whence twenty stalks may spring and yield
> Enough to stock a little field.
> The harvest of that field might then
> Be multiplied to ten times ten,
> Which sown, thrice more, would furnish bread
> Wherewith an army might be fed."

And herein is the strong attraction of this blessed work. Who can trace out its interminable issues? Who can tell the history of one of these seeds! It is the infinite development that gives it a charm. It can never die out—can never utterly fail—can never cease to grow and multiply its happy results, forever and ever. It is not measured, in its blessed product, by the strength of the muscle that sows it, nor by the power of the intellect, nor by the age or size of the sower, nor by the experience in the sowing. You can do it daily, hourly, and not tire. All the conditions and influences requisite for the

hundred-fold product are with God. And the absolute promise is ours. All that is asked is the earnest act, such as will express itself often, in the tear-drop of anxiety that goes along with the seed into the ground; and then, be sure, all your labor shall be more than recompensed with the rich harvesting—and all the *weeping* shall be more than repaid by the *reaping*.

And, my brethren, work while the day lasts! The time is short. Jesus wept at the grave of Lazarus, perhaps because that faithful disciple was lost to the town of Bethany—because his labors of Christian love in that dear household and in that whole community were ended—because one of his few faithful followers had gone to the grave and the narrow house had closed upon all his influence in that day of weakness and darkness. Think how every day shortens your opportunities! If you want the golden sheaves in your arms and bosom, you must sow the good seed. You shall reap what you sow.

"And beyond the sowing and the reaping,
Beyond the sighing and the weeping,
We shall be soon."

# XI.

## CHRISTIAN PRINCIPLE.

"He that is faithful in that which is least, is faithful also in much: and he that is unjust in the least is unjust also in much."—LUKE xvi. 10.

This life is properly called probationary. Though there is a sense in which all the race had their trial in their Head and Representative, there is another and important sense in which each man is put on trial for himself all through life. It is so by the very necessity of things.

In human relations it is universally recognized. Every man stands at his post on trial for higher and more responsible positions which he may occupy, if he be found faithful in this. The whole course of human responsibility is subject to this law. The boy who is true to the claims of boyhood—who is faithful in the household and faithful in the school—is the boy to be advanced to all the graver trusts of manhood. And so the good son is the one to be a good husband and a good father—and a good householder and a good citizen and a good Christian. While the converse is held to be equally true—that the bad boy comes to be fit for no worthy and honorable post in society. And so

the merchant's clerk is put upon his trial; as he conducts himself equal to his task—faithful in his sphere—so he is a candidate for the advanced positions of business, proves himself fit to take the headship and to become a master in his calling.

And so every calling is, by the divine constitution, probationary. The man is subjected to tests such as belong to his sphere of action, according to which he is adjudged faithful or not. And he is everywhere and every hour the candidate for promotion or disgrace. *Fidelity* must elevate him, *unfaithfulness* must degrade and sink him.

And this is so, by a necessary constitution, because, it is everywhere recognized that *principles* must decide men's character. For, in the long run, principles control men's conduct—good principles or bad—and the aim of all practical tests in society is just to find out by what principles a man's living is swayed, and according to what rules he lives and acts.

It is by a system of patient inductions that you arrive at the law of a man's conduct. He is watched on every side. Men measure him and weigh him; they take his aims and bearings; they study his actions in ever varying circumstances; and so, at length, they come to their opinion of him—believing all the while that his actions are moulded by a certain law, and that, in these daily particulars, his whole self is acted out.

The text gives us the formula of divine inspiration to this same effect.

The parable of the unjust steward is a parable

spoken for thousands of cases in every age of the world. How a man, in a most responsible position, may utterly betray his trust and make awful shipwreck of the confidence reposed in him; how, under some special pressure of temptation or trial, he may act himself out and develop hidden iniquities which show his unfitness for any responsible station—this is the picture that has a thousand forms of illustration and, like the *kaleidoscope*, with the same elements, turns up in every varying aspect of human demoralization.

The parable is, that this man was accused to his master of wasting his goods. It is not alleged that he had actually done it—only that he was accused of having done it. The parable will show us how he will demean himself under the accusation. You may be sure he will show himself the guilty man that he is, by following his thieving instincts and even propagating his fraud by making his lord's debtors accomplices with himself in the roguery. The man who could waste his master's goods was the man who could so unscrupulously go on to sacrifice his master's claims, so as to promote his own selfish interests. And hence the great Teacher, in the spirit of the profoundest philosophy, states it as in the text—"He that is is *faithful* in that which is least is *faithful also* in much, and he that is unjust in the least is unjust also in much."

*Principle*, my hearers—*principle*—this is the demand of society, and it is the demand of Christ. The advertisement in politics, in business, in the

household, in the church, is for men of principle—high, uniform, steady, consistent principle.

There are men who are said to be men of *no principle*—who are driven by every wind, who are in no sense reliable, who can not be depended upon for any firm, unflinching adherence to truth and rectitude in all circumstances, and whatever be the temptation or opposition they may meet—men of straw—the mere chaff of society—drifting with the breeze, the light and empty stuff, the mere refuse and stubble, the dead wood of the vineyard, that is fit only to be under foot and to be burned—men of present impulse, who go according to the wind and wave of the hour, who are not serious enough in their living to have adopted any fixed laws for the regulation of their conduct, who have an easy way with their consciences, and who can do any thing that they may find a present, pressing motive for doing; who will be unfaithful whenever they think they can be so with advantage and with impunity; men who find their justification with themselves in the fact that others do likewise, and that it is, in a sort, necessary to be unprincipled if one would do business or would make money.

Such men may be said to have principle, but their principle is a low, selfish interest. They may be said to have even fixed principles of dishonesty and iniquity. They have deliberately adopted for their living principles of falsity and corruption, of lying and overreaching in trade, and of debasement in morals. Moral principle of such soft text-

ure is easily eaten out by slow degrees—just as I have seen in oriental houses, where the worm stealthily perforates the soft wood of the rafters and so completely riddles it, that the fabric comes tumbling down over your head. And therefore, the cedar of Lebanon was so valuable for the timbers of the temple because the worms would not infest that highly aromatic wood.

Give me a true Christian, whose morals are based upon Christ and Christianity, and I know he is of the right stuff. The men who are the rafters in our social and political structures ought to be the cedar-of-Lebanon men, of such timber as God's Temple is built of, which the worms of corruption can not perforate, with an aroma such as worms can not bear.

And the text asserts the law of men's development.

This life is a life of *principles*, where the smallest particulars disclose the law of operation. We speak in nature of a principle of gravitation. And we know that it shows itself in the tiniest atoms as well as in the massive worlds. It was, perhaps, the falling of an apple from a tree that led the great philosopher to the discovery of the law by which the vast systems of the starry universe are held in their courses. It was the flying of a kite which unveiled to another philosopher the principle of electricity. And I have seen, in the great cathedral at Pisa, where Galileo, by the swinging of the chandelier from the high vaulted roof, discovered the principle of the earth's rotation. And

it is just because a great law in nature must take hold of minutest particulars and so must prove itself to be a law, that the smallest items have served for the discovery of grandest principles in the material universe.

And so it is uttered here of men, by the Great Searcher of hearts, that you may discover their principles of action by the merest minutiæ of life —"He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much, and he that is unjust in the least, is unjust also in much." That departure from duty is the leak in the ship's side that makes the wreck—it is the breaking of the link in the golden chain that binds the soul to truth and honor and to God. The eye of the needle is broken, the blade of the knife—therefore it is that offending in one point is guiltiness of all.

Apply this law to our higher relations and see in the first place how, *if one have religious principle it will take hold of smallest particulars.*

How few can appreciate the Gospel precept that makes our religion take hold of our *eating* and *drinking* and of whatsoever we do, as all to be done to the glory of God! God has not so written his law as to have a precept for every item of a man's living. The Decalogue has comprised all the commandments in *ten.* The whole moral code for every possible relation and condition of life is written on *two tables*, and in *half a score* of commands. And these all are further reduced to *two* great commandments and these two to *one*—and this *one* to *one word*—and this *one word* to *one syl-*

*lable* and that one syllable is LOVE! And in this sense, as God is a unit, so God has but *one principle* of all his conduct. And men are to have the same unity, and to be swayed by the same fixed, undeviating law which shall comprehend and control all their actions.

Take the *philosophical* idea of God and according to this, he is simply the Great First Cause and Last End of all things—the cold and cheerless originator of all material things, the prime and ultimate idea that is necessary to a beginning of all created objects, far back of all the starry universe, before all systems of worlds. And that is merely a formal principle of creatorship, to solve the mystery of nature and to answer to the questionings of reason, as to the origin and genesis of all things. But there is no light here upon personal and moral relations.

Take the *theological* idea of God and it is "God as a Spirit, infinite, eternal and unchangeable in his being, wisdom, power, holiness, justice, goodness and truth." And nothing less could make out his description; and these are his attributes which go to define his glorious essence and to describe his unsearchable being, as we speak of him and set him forth to one another, so that no point of his relations shall be left out. But when the Gospel presents God in his *practical* relations to us, as he is revealed in grace for our salvation, it is just *one word* that expresses it all, because it is just one principle that operates in all the details of his redeeming works and ways—and that word is LOVE.

And so it is the same word which expresses the whole commandment for men, because, this one high principle must operate in all the details of Christian living and must take hold of all the minutiæ of life.

Just as in the material world, if you could survey at a glance all the forces in operation everywhere—whether animal or mechanical or physical—all are traceable to the power emanating from the sun. The force of the muscle that wields the hammer or that moves the pen, and the force of the steam that drives the locomotive or the ocean vessel, and the force of the avalanche that tears the mountain sides—all forces from the volcano and the cataract and the tornado down to all the minor industries, in all the work and walk of life, they have all but one source of all their power and that is the *sun!* And so it is this *sun-force* in morals, which we call LOVE, that accounts for all true Christian living. In other aspects, as not merely an attribute but a trait of character, and a working power in the moral world, you may call it FIDELITY. And this is the word in the text for meeting God's high demand—a *faithfulness* that springs from *Christian faith* and operates in all the domain of human conduct.

Take now this Christian faithfulness. I say that true faithfulness must have its ground and essence in the Christian faith. Any principle of any lower origin must resolve itself into some of the world's poor maxims as that "Honesty is the best policy"—that is, that a man must be honest if, on the

long run, he would succeed in life, and that this proverb is the finding of human observation and experience—the verdict of soundest worldly philosophy—that one had better practice honesty than not, out of mere policy, and for his own selfish interest—for his standing in the community, for his peace of mind, for his success in life, and for his comfort in death. But this is not *faithfulness*, in the higher sense. One may be unfaithful without being pronounced dishonest, as the world goes, and so he may be honest—no thief, no defaulter—yet without being *faithful*. But when you come to a fidelity which is actuated by a strong Christian faith which credits these Scriptures in all their fulness, embraces these Christian promises, entertains these Christian hopes, takes firm hold of eternal realities, as here revealed, communes with God, takes counsel of Jesus Christ, and is under habitual influence of the powers of the world to come—*that is a Christian fidelity* which reaches the highest idea of human faithfulness, and takes hold of all the details of living. That is the high quality that makes a truly faithful man.

I know that Satan is strong, that his temptations are sharp and severe, that a man may sometimes find himself struck, as by a tornado of his power, or be skilfully lassoed by his arts; I know that he beguiled Eve through his subtlety. But I know that this is the very weighty motive for binding ourselves fast, by Christian principle and habit, and for throwing ourselves into the arms of divine power and grace that alone can overthrow Satan

and his hosts. Show me the man who adopts this Christian method of living, and I know he is trusty in all the relations of life.

Do you not see that men had rather employ for a confidential clerk, or for any office of trust, one who is professedly and manifestly a Christian; and when you can say of a man that he has *Christian principle*, you have in a word passed the highest encomium upon his character and living? One standard of all his conduct, one single rule of all his life, one single eye to his great aim and object, one thing to do, one cause to serve, one pattern to imitate, and that, the highest, purest possible; one Christ-like career to run, and hence one consistent, unwavering Christian course of duty. This principle of loyalty to Christ, call it what you will—love, faithfulness—this is Christian principle, and Jesus himself bears on his vesture the name Faithful and True.

Consider now, further, how the *littles* in life *illustrate principle.*

Two hundred years ago, when Sir Christopher Wren was building Saint Paul's Cathedral in London, a countryman came to him, seeking employment in wood-carving. The great architect asked him what he had been used to carve. The man confused and trembling answered that he had been used to carve *troughs.* "Troughs!" said Sir Christopher, "then carve me a group of swine, and bring it here this day week." True to the appointment, the man came with his carving and was at once engaged for seven years as wood-carver on that

magnificent edifice. Faithful *in littles* his *faithfulness in much* was inferred. If the great law of attraction did not bind together the minutest atoms, it could not bind together the planets. So, if the law of Christian love and of Christian loyalty does not act in minor particulars, it can not act *as a law* at all.

See how Christianity comes every day out of the secret closet and steps forth from those concealed and private acts of communion with God to all the thousand cares and labors of the day. See how personal religion is manifested by the daily tempers in manifold details; how it shows itself in the tender and gentle offices of home, before it goes out into business; and how along the street it puts forth the hand of charity and stoops with benefaction to the hut of poverty; drops a word of Christian counsel to the erring and seeks to reclaim the wanderer by some kindly act, all in a way to show the ruling passion of Christian love.

When Christ entered on his ministry and began by expounding to men the law of Sinai, he gave as a wonderful summary of it all, as a precept and rule of living for all, that Golden Rule that has been the admiration of all the world, "As ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them likewise, for this is the law and prophets."

But his *Gospel* reveals a *new commandment.* What is it? Is it to love others as we would have them love us? *No!* To love others as they love us? *No!* To love others as we love ourselves? *No!* To love others as *we love* CHRIST? *No!* But to

*love others* as CHRIST HAS LOVED US. And so it is that faith in Christ takes hold of the precious, gracious fact of his love to us, and so it works out the Christian faithfulness in all the relations, from the least even to the greatest; and so love to Christ becomes love to one another, and resolves itself into that manifold love which runs through all society. And so it is that, as in the golden candlestick of Zechariah, the oil in the bowl at the top and crown of the whole is supplied by the living olive-trees on either hand, and so runs down through all the seven pipes and branches for the living illumination of the world.

Then consider further, *how character acts itself out* most *naturally* and *freely* in *little things.*

No man can be *faithless* in *little* and *faithful* in *much.* No! It is just when men are off their guard, unconstrained by their surroundings, that you may see their real selves. What they do apart from special impulse, and only by the necessity of their governing principle, *that* exhibits them in their true light. Therefore it is that secret prayer and private study of God's word are held to be so evidential of Christian sincerity. He that seeth in secret will reward such *openly*, and the reward shall sit like a crown upon the head, like a halo on the brow. If it be only out of doors, or of Sundays, that a man is religious, you know that there is nothing in all that which may not be explained by a cold, heartless, selfish *policy.* But when one is found to be habitually set upon religious living, volunteering Christian work, seek-

ing out Christian service; when his thoughts manifestly take that direction, and casual words dropped in conversation show it, and the constant likings and leanings evince it; and when Christian duty is evidently a matter of *taste* and not of *task;* and when an ever-present law of Christian action sways the whole man, on small occasions as well as on great ones, in the social assembly as well as on the Sabbath; and when on week-days, he is found illustrating, by his walk, the Christian ideal that is set forth in the sanctuary, then you know that he may be relied on as a Christian man. You may count on his hearty support for all that is good—without shirking, without shrinking, without vacillation, without that gross and palpable inconsistency which makes some men's record a mere *yes and no*, all the way through life!

And then consider, further, that *life is made up of the littles.*

As these breaths and pulsations make up the physical life, so our Christian living must be shown in detail, if at all. Life is too short to wait for the rare and special tests which might seem, in themselves, so conclusive. You must put *this* and *that* together, and all these minute items prove the principle and law of living. Like the lines and pages of a book, they are the lines and chapters and paragraphs of life—the words and sentences by which we must read a man and which make up his record.

And then a consistent, *steadfast aim*, in all things, makes the *little* to become *so* much. To one who

has no such principled object of living, these items seem trifles. But every fabric of the garments that you wear must be woven with particular threads, and that fabric goes upon you as your clothing or *habit.* And these threads of life become habits by this principle.

So the weaver, after a pattern with his steady aim in view, brings his threads into their beautiful combination, delicate and expressive, like the Gobelin tapestry, as if from the pencil of the painter. And so I have seen the oriole, with an eye to the structure of her nest, gathering up the hairs and threads from the rubbish, and skilfully sewing them into the bag that she also suspends from the bough as her domicile for the little ones.

And then the *little* becomes *much* by natural and necessary development.

The man who is unjust in the least is unjust also in much, because it leads to this, because he is rapidly advancing to that further stage of progress. The waster becomes the embezzler, and the pilferer becomes the robber, and the robber becomes the highwayman, and the highwayman plies his fiendish art till he can even set the trap to throw the midnight train off the rail, with its load of human freight, and then, can cruelly file off from the finger of a dying woman in the wreck the diamond ring which was the token of wedded love.

The sentiment of our Lord in the text, so profoundly illustrated by the parable of the unjust steward, is that a lofty *Christian principle* is what is called for in life as the only safeguard of a man

in temptation, the only steady, satisfactory, propelling power of a man's living, and the pledge of an eternal future. Christ calls for *faithful* men, loyal to his cause and crown and covenant; at all times *faithful*, through evil report and through good report; *faithful* under burdens—bearing crosses, enduring sacrifices—or in the giddy whirl of position and prosperity *faithful*, and *faithful* through and through!

And he suggests to us all the solemn truth that this life is tentative, experimental and formative, in reference to the life hereafter; that here, we are daily subjected to testing processes that shall discover what we are, and how we shall be found worthy or unworthy of the higher trusts and offices of the heavenly world. And it is only as a man is found possessed of Christian principle, that he can be advanced and promoted to the higher positions beyond, where Christ is head. All this earthly stewardship, all these business operations, all this buying and selling and contracting and executing is only a means of proving men by the lower and secular responsibilities, finding out their true character and their real principles, and deciding whether they shall be entrusted with the riches of that higher sphere. And this is the question, as Christ powerfully puts it, "If ye have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon, who shall commit to your trust the true riches?" *If here*, on trial as stewards of that which is sordid and perishing, you have utterly failed, have wasted God's goods, or have returned no proper account to God,

then how could you expect a position of trust in that upper court and kingdom? "And if ye have not been faithful in that which is another man's, who shall give you that which is your own." If not faithful as *stewards*, how shall you be made *lords* of the household? If not faithful as agents, who shall make you *principals?* If, with these small sums committed to your charge, you have wasted the Master's goods and for purposes of self-emolument have made unfair alliances and combinations and unjust returns; if you betray an utter lack of Christian principle in your use of the worldly means entrusted to you, who shall commit to your trust the true riches, the immense estates and ample treasures of the heavenly world? If you are faithful only as between man and man, and not as between man and God, that is being faithful to the employees and not to the employer.

This is a life of germs and rudiments. This training is elementary. We are here at school. Every day's lessons are given us in the culture of the soul for the *cultus* or worship of eternity. The little, even here, advances to much. The juvenile piety soon becomes manly, stalwart, heroic, and passes on to glory for nobler deeds and honors. We are here learning the alphabet and spelling out the syllables of that language which we are to speak, and in which we are to read God's works and ways forever. Every man is training in that dialect in which he shall hold converse in all eternity. The street we travel here up to the edge of the river is continued on the other side the same street, and

is called there by the same name forever and forever. As we travel here so shall we journey there to all eternity.

It is fit that temptations should come upon us in this life; it is fit that they should assail us with tremendous power; and in the midst of their hottest, most fiery darts, there is but one safe, infallible recourse, and that is indicated in the prayer put into our mouths by the Master himself—"Lead us not into temptation," but lead us out of it—"deliver us from the evil."

My hearers, the great *investigation is coming on*, and for each of us. And who, then, is that faithful and wise steward whom his lord shall make ruler over all that he hath? Oh! is there no worthy ambition for the dignities and preferments and emoluments of the eternal world? Every thought and action passes into the account for that great day. Amidst the terrors and glories of the judgment-seat, who can imagine the joy of the man to whom the Judge shall say—"Because thou hast been *faithful* in a *very little*, IN A VERY LITTLE, have thou authority over ten cities!"

# XII.

## UNIVERSAL THANKFULNESS.

"In every thing give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you."—I THESS. v. 18.

The religion of Christ proposes to inspire men with a sentiment of liveliest *gratitude*, that so it may incite them to a life of loftiest praise. It makes it our first and highest duty to be thankful, and thus it provides directly for our highest happiness. It sets before us the most abounding incentives to thanksgiving. And who does not know that praise is pleasant and comely—that the spirit of praise is the spirit of joyfulness?

This universal thanksgiving is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning us—a secret found out by few. The will of God seems to most to be harsh and repulsive—only a severe decree or an inexorable demand for an obedience which is unnatural and irksome; only a rigorous exaction of duty under the threatening of a swift-coming judgment.

But properly understood, the will of God is not simply law, but Gospel also. It is indeed the revelation of law in order to the appreciation of the Gospel. It is not simply the absolute will of God

which is revealed—it is good-will to men. It is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning us; and that will is, that we shall exercise an habitual thankfulness, that we shall live under the constant inspiration of gratitude, that our lives shall be one anthem of praise, that every relation in which God stands to us and in which we stand to God shall provoke our thanks, and that by every new commandment we shall be put under new obligation of thanksgiving. This is what the religion of Christ contemplates for us.

This appears, *first*, from the light in which God is presented to us as the Author of our being.

A personal God and not any dumb idol of the heathen claims our praise as our Creator—not any impersonal principle of creative energy, not any abstract law of nature, not any mere idea of development.

Pity upon the poor sceptic who argues out his own creation from some dumb theory of matter, and tries to find the origin and source of his being in the lower animal tribes; who would attribute the race of mankind to a slow development from the race of fishes and of beasts, instead of a development of God's plan in creation, working up from the lower to the higher. Whom has he to thank for his existence? An idea! A theory! An abstraction! A law of nature! But no God! The astronomer Lalande declared that he had searched through the heavens with his telescope and had not found God: as though God were a material object, like a star, to be found with a tele-

scope. This is the madness and mockery of the false science, while the true science everywhere finds God in his works. The fool hath said in his heart—"No God."

Blank materialism and atheism, cheerless and black as midnight, comes into popular favor, just from an impatience of these gracious restraints which the religion of Christ imposes upon us; just from a hatred of being beholden even to God or of being bound even to thanksgiving, under a sense of personal favor at his hands.

But this plan of God, to put us upon a life of thanksgiving, appears further, in the fact that our creation is represented as the work of Jesus Christ. Not the absolute idea of Godhead as a great spirit of the Indian, or the abstract Divinity as a supreme Power in the world of matter, but the second Person of the Blessed Trinity—this Logos, Theanthropos, God-man, the Lord Jesus Christ. We are referred to him who hath redeemed us, as the Personal Agent in giving us being. And then it is our glory, not so much that we were not made brutes, as that our Maker is allied to us in our humanity—allied to us even in nature, as himself the model after which we were formed; and then coming himself to be formed in our human image. And here we find that there was, from all eternity, an ideal of manhood in the Godhead, after whose image man was made. The Godhead aiming to express itself in manhood and man, in his creation, thus made to foreshadow and herald forth the God-man!

And then even more than this, we get the idea of God's Fatherhood, not from his absolute Creatorship so much as from the Sonship of him by whom we are created—in whose image we are made and through whose Sonship we are made sons. And so our existence is announced as having come to us from the very same hands which were pierced for our redemption by the nails of the cross. Oh what a cheering revelation is this, that he hath created all things by Jesus Christ! Then our original creation from the dust is associated closely with the incarnation at Bethlehem and with this new creation in which we are recreated in Christ Jesus unto good works. And so every pulsation of our heart is commissioned to speak his praise as the Author of our being, and of our redeemed and glorified being, here and hereafter.

And this principle is still further apparent from the plan of God in providence and grace, always to put us under Gospel obligations.

This is indeed the meaning of those sacred, gracious ties by which we are held fast to God in Christ. They are Christian obligations—bonds of gratitude—all having their basis in the work of Jesus Christ, accomplished for us in a suffering life and a shameful death and a glorious resurrection. And though the natural heart chafes under these Gospel commandments, as a restraint to carnal appetites, they are simply calls to grateful remembrance of Jesus. There is no providential favor we receive, not even our breath nor our daily bread, but we are taught to accept it as from the

very hand of our covenant Lord and Saviour—the God-man. And so there is no single duty which we are commanded to discharge under the Gospel, but is enjoined upon us in the very same strain as his dying command to sit around his table. This do, and this, and this, in remembrance of me!

Properly understood then, every duty is to be entered upon and performed in the spirit of grateful song and in thankful remembrance of his death for us. We are bidden to go out to our day's toil and even to the day's burdens and hardships, *singing!* For these daily obligations are only the golden cords by which he would bind us fast and faster to himself.

Enclosed within them all is the historic thread of his sorrow and self-sacrifice for us, calling for some poor requital. And Christian duty is meant to be the sacrifice of praise to God, continually, where, instead of smoking lambs or wreathing incense, is the volume of hearty thanks to God, which these only symbolized—expressed, not only in words, but in works.

We have come to use the word "sacrifice" as synonymous with hardship and loss. But this is only a confession of our reluctance in God's service.

It is the sacrifice of *praise.* Hence it is that the whole commandment is fulfilled by *love.* It could not be expressed by any specific deed or catalogue of deeds; but it is expressed by one glowing affection of the soul—all inclusive—comprehending all that is to be felt and all that is to be done, where the love finds manifold expression in action. It

is the well-spring of a voluntary and cordial obedience. And so it is love always answering to love. Even the ten commandments of Sinai are answered to by love. For love is personal and binds us to the object, which is God himself, and leads to manifold utterances in the lips and in the life. No other gods to acknowledge, no idols to worship, no profanation of God's name to indulge, and the tender and devout remembrance of him culminating in his own day. These are only expressions of love. And so we may conceive of God, in all his laws, as only putting us upon the platform of praise and only binding us to love himself, as he is revealed in his law—to thank and bless his name in all our living, and all the while putting a new song into our mouths, even praise to our God.

And this same idea is further apparent if we consider what he plans for us in the new nature.

When he transforms us, when he works within us a new heart and new spirit, it is mostly a heartiness of thankful service and a spirit and temper of thanksgiving in all our lives, to which we are introduced. The new eye to see is an eye for the beautiful in God's character, word and works—beholding loveliness in it all, and ground for gratulation in it all, and call for praise in it all. And the Christian spirit is therefore, mainly, a spirit of thankfulness which is, first of all, a confession of dependence and, next, an expression of loving obedience. The exercises of the new nature are, therefore, the happy responses of the

heart to Christ, the glad and grateful recognition of his claims, the cheerful admiration of Jesus in the Scriptures and in nature and in all that he is and does, the jubilant testimonies to his faithfulness, the loving expressions of gratitude to him in all the life.

And still further, this plan and principle of the religion of Christ, to inspire us with thanksgiving, must be apparent from the provision made for us by Christ's finished work.

That heritage of joy hereafter is everywhere depicted for us in the Scriptures as a stimulant to every blissful expectation. The bounding heart, under its deepest sorrows or cares, is bidden to rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the atonement. And we are animated by a joy unspeakable and full of glory, receiving the end of our faith, even the salvation of our souls. Through all the darkness and midnight of the world's troubles, this ineffable glory from the other side beams upon us—where all is joy and all is peace—where there is no voice but that of song, because there is no sentiment but that of thankfulness and no aim but that of a loving devotion for all eternity. Out of the depths of poverty, on the hardest cot of straw, and suffering the agony of disease on the brink of dissolution, the poor believer is "begotten again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled."

There, in that blest estate, the occupation is

praise, the duty is praise, and the law of the society is praise, and the atmosphere of the place is praise—songs of everlasting joy are on the heads of the ransomed throng. And the highest conception of heaven, as a state of blessedness, is this: that it is an estate of happy fellowship with God and happy, grateful devotion to God forever.

And God's aim for each of us in Christ Jesus—his thought of love for us in Christ is, that we shall be happy in him in the giving of thanks to him, so that he shall receive our ascriptions of praise eternally, making him most blessed in the blessings we ascribe to him, for blessings bestowed upon us. And there, in the retrospect of our earthly career, we shall forever praise him for all the way in which he has led us to glory.

But there is a second point in the text and equally involved in this religion of Christ. It is that in every thing we are to give thanks; for this thing that occurs to us *in providence*, whatever it be, is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning us.

It is easy to glory in prosperity; but it is no easy thing to glory in tribulation and to glory in it just for being able to see through it to the glory which it works out. It is not easy for us to believe that God has constant thoughts respecting us—has even a plan for each of us—a perfect plan for us to follow out, if we will; a plan comprising all our lot in life. But it is even so.

He said to Cyrus, when he commissioned him as the deliverer of his people from Babylon: "I have

girded thee, though thou hast not known me." He meant, that all the steps by which that great leader of his people out of captivity had been himself led by God, were just in order to that result, so glorious and triumphant, though the man was most unconscious of it all.

Who doubts that Jesus traversed the other side of Jordan and came to Jericho with an eye to heal the blind men there, and to convert Zaccheus the publican there? Who doubts that, just as the sun courses along his path in the sky, to lighten different hemispheres and to gladden different homes and even to pour his soft beams upon the cottage, the most humble garden plot, and to warm and bless the tiniest wild flower of the prairie, so Jesus trod the borders of Tyre and Sidon to seek out that Syrophenician woman, and came thirsting, at noontime, to the well of Jacob, to meet that very woman of Samaria there? Who doubts that God's great mind teems with thoughts about you and me—with his plans for you and me—and that his plan of grace is comprehensive of all our cases and circumstances? Oh! if God could make any mistake; if he could ever forget, or fail, or falter; if any person or item in his domain of creatures could escape his notice or elude his control; if he did not literally preserve and govern all his creatures and all their actions; if it were not literally true that every hair of our head is numbered, that a sparrow does not fall to the ground by the stone or arrow of the heedless boy without our Father, then how would our ground of confidence and con-

solation be utterly swept away from us, amidst all this turmoil of life?

But observe, first, *the whole scheme of providence is redemptive.*

The history of the world is the history of redemption. The history of providence, as it embraces all individuals and nations from the beginning, is the history of God's redeeming plan. And providence, in all its amazing scheme and structure, has just one grand idea—one focus for all its scattered beams, one nucleus around which all its events beautifully crystallize—and that is God's idea of redemption by Christ Jesus. If this be so, then no event, whether public or private, social or personal, but is more or less directly or remotely within this broad circumference. Providence, in all its dealings with you and me, is redemptive.

Your own experience has possibly taught you to say of this or that dark event in your history —"It is best"—on the bare principle that whatever befalls us will somehow eventuate well; or out of a determination to keep up heart, and take things as they come in a stoical indifference; or even out of a disposition to hope at least for some good result which may possibly come out of the darkness. But here is an enlightened, intelligent and, above all, grateful view to be taken of every affliction, great or small, that this particular thing, hard as it is to bear, is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you.

*First*, that it is willed by God. No accident,

no irresponsible fate, no mere craft or malice of man, no uncontrolled spite of Satan, but God's particular intent.

And *second*, that it is his intent in Christ Jesus, comprised within his plan of grace—not therefore any severity, not in mere judgment, but as belonging to the scheme of grace and salvation by Christ Jesus.

And *thirdly*, that it is his plan concerning you, personally, as a link in the golden chain of your salvation, as a direct and individual provision of grace for your very self.

Ah! here lies the secret of rejoicing in tribulation, of glorying in infirmities, of taking joyfully the spoiling of one's goods for Christ, and of disdaining a mere earthly deliverance. It is just from understanding this divine philosophy by which the tribulation works—works patience and experience—until the blessed result is an animated and triumphant Christian hope, brightened by contrast with all the deepest darkness. It is just by learning how the personal weakness becomes an occasion for the power of Christ to rest upon the soul, and how the spoiling of one's earthly goods and the lack of an earthly deliverance may give sharper relish for the enduring substance beyond. It is just from apprehending the divine policy of advancing our personal salvation by all these means and agencies which, to the sufferer, may seem hard and inscrutable, but which, in God's view, are the most effective methods of working out our redemption.

I have seen the sailor full of glee at the bursting of a storm upon his vessel, while the timid passengers shrank away and shrieked in terror. He knew the course of the gale, how it would drive his vessel into port, and how he had only to climb the mast-head, take in his canvas to bear the storm, and trim his craft, so as to outride the gale; knowing that even though it were midnight, and the scene all dreary, and the howling tempest fearful to the inexperienced, he should find himself, at morning, safely in port, even though he should have lost a spar or had his rigging torn to ribbons by the relentless hurricane.

You have seen it so; some of you, like the nobleman at Capernaum, have made your first acquaintance with Jesus at the illness of your boy, and you have perhaps already seen that the dear little fellow was brought to the point of death, that you might be brought to the feet of Jesus. Take that example from your most recent history, that bereavement in your household; bitter as was the cup, stunning as was the blow, that very event was not merely the divine will in the general, so that it could not have happened had not God willed it—that is philosophy. But more, it was God's great, wise, tender, loving thought in Christ Jesus concerning you—this is Gospel.

As he cared for you—as he had eternally planned for your salvation, if you will; as he knew your case and your present necessity; as he marked out a course for you in life, by following which, you may be saved, and as he often hedged up that path with

thickets and thorns, to keep you in the way; as he would not have you lost; so, and precisely on this account, he ordered that overwhelming sorrow to enter your household. It was in his heart simply to lead you to God, breaking you down at his feet, that he might hear your cry and bless you: chastening you, not for his pleasure, but for your profit, that you might be partaker of his holiness. If this be so, then you could not possibly have done without that sorrow.

Then that lesson was in your education for glory; and the omission of it might have left you to lose your way in the wilderness and fail of your heavenly heritage. Then that particular trial, which you called the bitterest cup of your life, was as truly in Christ's programme for your salvation as was the agony of your dying Lord—not occupying any such place, I grant; not meriting any iota, nor achieving any thing which could be achieved, only by his vicarious groans and tears and blood, but belonging to the same scheme as his sacrifice and indispensably bound up with it in the plan for your redemption.

"Oh!" you say, "if I could only so believe!" But this belief is that to which you are invited, that these trials are God's gracious cords, drawn only tighter; as when one scales some Alpine summit and feels the rope of his guide almost like the rope of the hangman because that is all that holds him up as he overhangs the abyss; or as when from the wreck of the steamer, one must be drawn through the flood by the rope around him, in order

to be saved. I grant it; it is no easy thing so to construe every bitterness of life, as only an ingredient in God's sacramental cup, but herein is the training for us under the Gospel. If we will receive it, this is the will of God.

"What," you say, "can there be any bright side to my trial—the ingratitude of children, the treachery of bosom friends, the loss of dear ones or the loss of property?" Yes—the upper side, where the sun shines out on the dark clouds all radiant with love. "Oh!" you say, "if I can feel that my trial is the will of God and, especially, that it is the loving will of God in Christ Jesus concerning me, I can accept it and go on under the heaviest load, rejoicing in the Lord alway!"

Does any one doubt as he looks now upon the history, that that poor paralytic, who was so helpless as to be carried by four friends like pall-bearers to Jesus for a cure, had his paralysis sent upon him, as a means of grace?—just in order that he might be let down, through the broken verandah, into the presence of the great Healer, and might hear him say, "Thy sins are forgiven thee"? Oh! what an insight do we get into the wondrous combinations of providence and redemption, when he replies to all the questioning, whether is easier to say, "Thy sins be forgiven thee, or, rise, take up thy bed and walk. But that ye may know that the Son of Man hath power on earth to forgive sins, he saith to the sick of the palsy, Rise and walk!" And so also that ye may know that he hath power on earth to heal the paralytic, he

saith, "Thy sins are forgiven." The providence is redemptive.

And, *second, the redemption is providential.*

The path to glory for us sinners lies through this world. The great Redeemer does not, at once upon our conversion, take us up to heaven; but he makes us set our faces thitherward—makes us aim at it and march towards it, and makes us describe the pathway by our weary, foot-sore progress in a gradual training and unfolding of our new nature for that new estate. Our path lies through the wilderness to Canaan. He can not do the marching for us. We must march ourselves. Every dealing, therefore, comes to us labelled with our personal address and with this inscription: this thing and this, whatever it be, is "the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you."

The likeness of Jesus, in which we are to awake, is to be chiselled by sharp instruments, and the features are thus to be delicately wrought out and clearly defined, till they glow with the very lineaments of Divinity. There seems often, therefore, a severity in the dealing. But it is just because the finish must needs be exquisite that the artist must grave and carve so much and strike so many blows.

There will often appear to be a strange indifference to your earthly circumstances in God's dealings. But is it not according to truth? Have you not often yourself seen how houses and lands and comforts, such as gold can purchase, aye and even friends, which gold can not buy, are noth-

ing, if the heart be sick—if you have no inward peace? And therefore is it that God will have his dealing reach your inmost spirit and probe those hidden depths and cure that trouble within. And then you are possessed of the essential elements of happiness and may feel yourself quite superior to the earthly lot. Look at the boy who can be saved from the wreck of that sinking steamer, only by a kind hand thrusting him violently through the narrow port-hole to the outside.

Besides, there is a training needful for the life beyond; and the living here must therefore be made to take hold upon the life hereafter. And the discipline is requisite, just in proportion as the future work is in the higher department.

The worker in iron can not set his hand to work in gold; the huge bellows and hammer and anvil are not the implements of the goldsmith. That brawny arm and rough finger and careless eye and sturdy blow are not the qualifications for the fine tracery and gorgeous chasing of the precious metal which is to glisten on the bosom of royalty or on the finger of wealth as a gem of art. Oh no! That is not the work which graves the very name of the owner and of the donor on the golden gift and makes it a presentation of love.

And our education here is to be a *musical* education.

It is the aim of God's schooling to instruct us in the service of praise. And this can be done, in some cases, only in a small degree as yet. Some are so complaining, so discordant; they are so in-

genious in detecting flaws in their daily allotments, that they seldom take up any anthem upon their lips. But others are full of song; they cheer the most melancholy hours by some hymn of praise, and, at worst, they are only striking a minor key, soothing the painful moments by the plaintive tones.

"Some murmur when their sky is clear,
And wholly bright to view,
If one small speck of dark appear
In their great heaven of blue.
And some with thankful love are filled
If but one streak of light,
One ray of God's good mercy gild
The darkness of their night."

And is not this the secret of a happy life? No mere chimera, no castles in the air, no gay routine of exhausting excitements and excessive indulgences, but a life of joy built upon the most solid foundations of God's Gospel truth. Not only viewing every thing as consistent with God's will, but rejoicing always in God's will, as it is in Christ Jesus concerning us. Try it one day—one hour, to be thankful for every thing on this high principle—for prosperity, not merely because it is sweet, but because it is God's will concerning you in Christ Jesus; for adversity, not only because it is the divine will, but because this very thing, whatever it be—disappointment, bereavement—is the divine will in Christ Jesus concerning you.

I have seen the highest skill in engineering gain the rugged mountain summit by a back track—by

doubling the road upon itself—just because the grade was too steep to be overcome otherwise, and the chasm too deep and fearful to be bridged over. I have seen the same object accomplished by tunnelling the ridges, and laying the track through the dark bowels of the mountain peak; and then, oh, if you are afraid as you enter the tunnel—afraid of the sudden gloom and the fearful noise and the overhanging masses—the clatter of wheels echoed by the rocky walls—if you think you have gone into that dreary midnight passage never to come out, then you may shrink and sink, just for lack of confidence in him who laid the pathway by that dark route, as the very best. But maybe you have gone through it often enough to feel no shudder, nor shock, but only laying aside your paper, or hushing for a moment your conversation, you can sit and sing till the light breaks in at the farther side.

My brethren take this passage from God's book of joy, wear it as a frontlet between your eyes, grave it upon the palms of your hands, try the sweet experiment of a universal thankfulness—everywhere, everyhow, and always.

"Careful for nothing, prayerful for every thing, thankful for any thing"—"and the peace of God which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds by Christ Jesus."

# XIII.

## FEAR AND FAITH.

"What time I am afraid, I will trust in thee."—PSALM lvi. 3.

The Psalmist, in the text, commits himself beforehand, for all his seasons of alarm, to a uniform and an unshaken confidence in God. The power of such a principle in the life of any man must needs be amazing.

If one had a drug for all his pains and fevers and flesh wounds, so that the application of it would always give him ease and work a ready cure, how must it affect his mortal history!

But beyond these actual afflictions, *fears* are common to us all. And if these all could be allayed at once by some sovereign appliance, how blest were the bosom that could carry in itself the wondrous efficacious balm! How immensely any of our lives must be relieved to wipe out, at once, from our emotions the whole list of alarms temporal and spiritual, secret fears, sudden frights and overhanging terrors! How the past history of any one here must have been quite another thing, if those brooding apprehensions and dreary forebodings that have made up so much of our experience, could have had no place!

Observe; the Gospel message is not merely "be *healed*," "be *saved*," but, "*be not afraid*, it is I, *fear not*." When you consider how the news of trouble may be borne to you on any breeze, what a stretch of security is that to cover with the promise or to embrace in the description of a believer. "He shall not be afraid of *evil tidings;* his heart is fixed, trusting in the Lord." And when you know something of what it is to have the pestilence stalk abroad through your streets or in your neighborhood, smiting the people with panic, to hear the sweet assurance coming to you in such terms as these—"Thou shalt not be afraid for the terror by night nor for the arrow that flieth by day, nor for the pestilence that walketh in darkness, nor for the destruction that wasteth at noonday." This is such a balm as the world can not give.

This language in the text is not that of a mere resolve—the result of some theoretic speculation, or of some temporizing policy, or of some self-sufficient impulse. It is the outbreak of devout communion with God—fresh in the experience of *what he is for a trust*, and it is a solemn, personal pledge, left with the divine party as the fruit of most solemn personal intercourse and understandings.

It is the testimony of one whose common faith has grown so strong, through ordinary, every-day exercise as to feel quite prepared for trying seasons. It requires one to have trusted in daily matters to rally an adequate trust for sudden and severe occasions. The lone tree that would bide the tempest needs to be rooted and strengthened

under many ordinary winds. It is no solitary act of faith that is requisite. It is the believing spirit.

Observe, then, why he seizes upon his seasons of *fear* that are to come again as they have naturally come before. It is not the feeling of the coward sinner, who never flies to God but when his fright comes on. It is not the cold and sluggish plan of a false professor who bespeaks God's attention for such times of terror, and cares not for him beside. It is not the presumptuous confidence of a man who composes himself in the general goodness of God for seasons of adversity. It is the feeling of a ripe believer who has just come out of some sore alarm, and because he has found God a very present help in trouble, has at once *built an altar there* and called the place by that name and written this inscription, like Abraham's on the mount, "The Lord will provide."

You know something of what it is to have commercial revulsion desolate your business circles, prostrating your most established merchants, striking down your most trusted dependences, drying up your best worldly resources, all of a sudden, it may be—all in one tremendous crash.

Consider, then, *first* of all, that this trusting spirit which so braces itself against fear, is well *suited to the grounds of our hope.*

We have learned by many an experience to *discriminate* between objects of confidence. Not all persons or things, alike, can win our faith. God has given us himself for our trust—all his resources, all his attributes; whom no casualty can

overtake, whom no fortuity can disappoint, whom no power can baffle, whom no demands can exhaust. Head over all things—Lord of lords, God over all—in whom all things consist: HE is our Saviour. "Look unto *me*," he says, "and be ye saved, for I am God and there is none else"—"Trust ye in the Lord forever, for in the Lord Jehovah is everlasting strength." No wonder that one who so eminently trusted him should so often have made it the chorus of his songs for all ages: "Blessed is the man that trusteth in thee." No wonder that everywhere in troublous times, God's people have sung, in all languages, and have even gone out to the battle with enemies, singing—"God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble; therefore will not we fear though the earth be removed."

But more than this, God has given us a covenant ordered in all things and sure. This *written pledge* for whatever may betide us—so worded as to cover all cases and circumstances, all issues and events—provides for adversities, is ordered in trials, as well as in prosperity.

Consider, then, in the *second* place, that *the relation here observed between fear and trust is that in which vital religion peculiarly appears.* For we see how it is an easy matter to entertain a general trust, apart from any realities of its exercise. It is easy to hold the doctrine of it, apart from any of its operations. A technical, professional faith, that is with many a church member like a mere theory of the heavens which he has *given in* to but

which concerns him not, is quite another thing from an active and practical trust. Easy enough is it to trust God in smooth seas, and in bright sunshine, and to profess such trust in the general; but to put it in practice and have a lively exercise of it, when tempests come on and storms howl fearfully around you—this is the *substance* of which that is the shadow at most.

This sad mistake of many is the basis of that unnatural separation between a faith for *spiritual things* and a faith for *temporal things*. The Christian that trusts God for his soul and can not trust him for the body, shows this egregious absurdity —"Is not the life more than meat and the body than raiment," and the soul than the body? If God will clothe the lily, will he not clothe his people? And if he will clothe their bodies, will he not clothe their souls?

Understand, then, a light is for the darkness, whether it be that of a deep dungeon in the daytime, or that of ordinary night. The exercise of trust belongs to *whatever time* of *fear*. It is appropriate for any kind of fear, in any stage of our history, in any department of our affairs. And so, the only genuine trust will take this broad compass of the text and commit itself for any such a juncture, anywhere, in any case—"Trust in the Lord at all times ye people." The times of fear are the very times for trust, when our principle is tested and our religion can display itself where nothing else could serve.

Observe, then, the importance of this Christian

principle in the text as appears, *thirdly*, from the tenor of *God's dealings with his people* wherein he develops their religion.

It is found to be precisely what our conditions in life most chiefly demand. It is of God's own purpose that we are constantly thrust into those difficult positions where this very peculiar grace is called for. The essence of a godly trust seems to lie in this relation which it bears to fearful circumstances. There is no room for trust where a man can see as he goes. It is where he can not see —where the way is hedged up, that he is *shut up unto the faith.* There he is called on to confide in what shall be revealed in the fact, and what has been already revealed in the promise. It is because this is of the very nature of Christian trust that every Christian finds himself so often in just such straits—where he is divested of common reliances and sees other trusts torn one by one away, and sees, too, the floods of his affliction rising fast around him, so that it grows deep and deeper where he stands—then he does so often *cry* out, at length, as one dealt with and disciplined and dissuaded from any other trust—"Lead me to the Rock that is *higher than I.*"

Observe now, the working of this principle in *spiritual* things.

It is just where we have abundant grounds of fear that we are challenged to seize this surpassing confidence. It was just because he was afraid, that the Christian cast himself into such arms of a divine covenant for his soul. Therefore Peter

was allowed to step out into the sea that in his rising fear he might trust. Who comes in at the open gate of this city of refuge but the affrighted sinner who flees from the wrath to come? "Knowing therefore the terror *(fear)* of the Lord, we persuade men."

We know that no man will ever find occasion or motive to trust until some fears are aroused. They who have indolently taken up this Christian reliance, with scarce an emotion, without a struggle, can not know, as yet, how great is this salvation. They have not grasped their religion strongly or earnestly enough to get the full advantage of it. Here, then, the timid Christian, full of fears and pressed down with gloomy apprehensions, may find out his common mistake. It is just because he sees so much to alarm in God's avenging justice, in his own peculiar sins and in his sad unfitness for God's favor and for heaven—it is just because of this, that he is called to trust in him who meets all these grounds of fear by his own amazing provisions! Let the trembling and alarmed remember that only they who are somehow *weary and heavy laden can take rest!* Only a wounded spirit can take the balm.

Such it is that Christ is seeking—those who would seek such an one as Christ. To whomsoever the Gospel comes as glad tidings, to him it is the Gospel. The poor man stripped and bruised and left helpless by his foes on the road-side may be passed by the Levite and bigot priest and scorned by the crowd because he is in so

*grievous a case.* But to such an one, and for *this very reason* the good Samaritan turns. He has the oil and wine for his wounds and he has the price for his keeping. Let a man that has FEARS—fears for his soul, fears of his unbelief, fears about his acceptance, fears of his insincerity, fears lest he has grieved the Spirit, fears lest he has committed the unpardonable sin, fears lest his stubborn, icy heart may never melt—let him fly indeed and fly from the wrath that is coming, but let him FLY TO CHRIST. Here is the rule of Christian living —"What time *I am afraid*"—afraid that I shall yet come short of heaven, afraid that Satan will yet gain the advantage and in some heedless hour will thrust his fang into my heel or into my heart, afraid that Christ will leave me and the Holy Ghost give me up, afraid that I shall be devoured by savage beasts in the dark valley of death—"What time *I am afraid*, I will trust in thee!"

But observe further, *the very fear* shall *suggest the confidence*, and the working of this principle in *temporal* things must be essentially the same as in the spiritual.

Do we forget that Abraham's faith, for which he had righteousness counted unto him, was the faith of a father *respecting* his child who was the son of promise, when the heart of the patriarch almost bursting, and his very tears mingling with the sacrifice, yet believed and yet triumphed? Do we forget that the minute, secular history of all the ancient saints is preserved to us on holy record for its influence upon our daily living? Do

we forget that even in our temporal career and in each day's course, we are to walk by *faith*, and *not* to walk by *sight?* The passing views we take of things may be from the appearance, as we may not always think but that the sun walks daily round the earth as would seem. But to make a calculation of the heavens on this hypothesis would involve the grossest mistakes.

We see, then, the common violation of this Christian principle of the text, amongst the troubles of real life—that amidst their fears Christian men will give themselves up to their own sensations and vain reasonings and virtually set aside this trust! They will demand *to see in the dark* else they can not *believe;* but it is just where they *can not see* that they are *required to believe.*

What practical ignorance of this vital principle do we find amongst our real adversities! Sad enough is it that they who stand in the church as Christians and whose religion, like any other light, should shine brightest in the dark, show often so much fretfulness and fearfulness and despondency, and give so little credit to a covenant God in their times of trouble or alarm! Behold what efforts are made to fly from providence, to effect an escape from the danger and from the duty that it brings, rather than amidst the danger to trust! So Jonah flies. Hard is it in the midst of terrors to stand still and see the salvation of God: yet this is the perfection of our confidence.

Will you trust Christ no further than you *can see him?* Must you perceive beforehand and *all along*

just what he is bringing about and how he will do it? Then you would walk by sight and not by faith. Then you would strip him of his prerogative. Oh, it is one thing to go your own way of your own self and quite another thing is it *to be led.* But the blind man is led—is willing to be led—and though there is discomfort in blindness, yet who would not be blindfolded or blinded rather than go to his own place and in his own way to perdition! "I will bring the *blind* by a way that they knew not, I will lead them in paths that they have not known, I will make darkness light before them and crooked things straight." This is the prerogative and promise of God.

But bring the professed believer to the point and the Christian responds to all the claim with the cheerful confession, "*I will trust in thee.*" Let even Jacob be actually famishing with all his house and have Joseph's coat brought home to him in blood, and Benjamin demanded by a severe lord in Egypt, and how naturally he exclaims in his grief and fear—"All these things are against me!" But those things were for him—only he could not see it. He sees or thinks he sees inevitable ruin staring him in the face. It is so imminent, so certain; how vain are human reasonings! The quiet he could get from a mere fatalism is only the quiet of despair. Nothing comforts him, but every thing crushes more and more. The case is clearly desperate. All that he sees is such as to break him down, but God in Christ he does not see. Who can dispute the senses, he says.

So even with Abram the father of the faithful. What can possibly come in now, between the uplifted knife of Abraham and the slaughter and death of Isaac. "Isaac must now die, and if Isaac dies, I am undone." A short step to the conclusion. Yet, behold even *now*, only *behind him*, is the very ram for the burnt-offering, and hovering over him, only silent as yet, is the eternal word of God. Yet how commonly our *fears* get the mastery.

The den of lions would seem certain death to Daniel. "It MUST BE so," we would say. "Who ever escaped from it, or from the fiery furnace of Nebuchadnezzar heated seven times?" Yet, *give up* to such fears and you may die of grief before even the reality comes on—you may sink into the earth, out of mere despair, while all your energy is demanded for your escape. You may induce the disease which you dread by the very panic of mind which you indulge.

It is vain to say "What time I am NOT AFRAID, I will trust in thee." There is no virtue *in this* if this be all, no REALITY in it. It is a delusion just because there an active trust has no place.

And then, too, we are mostly comforting ourselves, that we have *no occasion* for reliance on God. Many of us have a church faith of this kind —speculative, inactive, ready to DENY ITSELF instead of to endure *self-denial;* ready to give way, the moment it is tried in the fire.

"Are you able to drink of the cup that I drink of, saith Christ himself, and to be baptized with the

baptism that I am baptized with"—not indeed to plunge from the Temple-top and trust to angels as Satan would have you do, but to go up on your own cross and even *die by violence*, and trust? Are you ready to give up your own Isaac and believe that God can even raise him up if he will, to make his promise good. And finally, when things have even turned out most adversely as it would seem, are you able to believe that *yet*—YET—all can eventuate well and will eventuate in the best manner under God? Mary, Martha, can you believe not only that if Christ had been here your brother had not died but even now, at this late hour, with Lazarus four days in the grave, your brother shall rise again and *rise now* if he gives the word—rise in some other form—in some friend and helper if not in person. Can you trust, my hearer, even while God seems plainly in an attitude to slay you; nay, after he has slain all your earthly hopes?

Here is the difficulty. The things which discourage you are *seen*. The things which should encourage you are *unseen*. Your fears seem to you all opposite to these hopes. But the time of fear is the time for trust. In the heat of that *very struggle*, believe! Then, when any unbeliever would despair—when, in an inner prison, your feet are fast in the stocks and it is midnight, and the jaïlor is at the door, and soldiers are chained fast to you on either side—*then* if you can sing praises unto God, this is *trust*, worthy a Christian believer. It shall be counted to you for righteousness, because it is such a trust as lays hold on Christ for

the soul's salvation. It is of the same essence as the saving faith.

To most, the practical absurdity will seem to be that such a trust for such stern realities is like living on an *idea!* That it is nothing but *doctrine* attempting to console a man in the very strife of adversity. But it is not living *on* faith as you think. It is living *by* faith and living ON Jesus Christ. You say there is nothing to *rest on!* Nothing of sense, I know, but what does the *globe* rest on? It is hung out by God's power in the air and kept in its accurate orbit by the infinite consistencies of that power. It is founded on the seas and established on the flood. In the sea of your fears and your trials, walk on the troubled waters at the bidding of your Lord.

There is something of this confidence in society, where often you must have an ultimate trust in fellow-men back of all that appears. This is a confidence in character or in power, or both! Is it much to trust God thus far, or on this principle to the very farthest—his character is glorious, his power is infinite. You must trust a fellow-man out of your sight, often farther than you can see him. Your ultimate reliance is on his established and unwavering truth and honesty and ability. Can you not so accredit God, though he be in the heavens, the better for his being so exalted, where you know of his power all around you and in you and dare not doubt his word?

Come now, my hearer, to some dreadful trial and see how you can trust. Let your hopes all be dis-

appointed and let every thing look dark and blank as midnight or the grave. Let your earthly resources all fail! Your throbbing heart begins to shrink and despair. All these things are against you. Your trust seems but as a feather on the tide amidst this tempestuous and boiling sea. Behold, now, at length some *monster of the deep* is ready to swallow you up! Can you go into his jaws trusting in God? You ask a sign from heaven? There shall no sign be given you but the sign of Jonas the prophet.

You have examples, you have the assurances beforehand; the word that Christ hath spoken is your hope. You would not think so far as to conceive the wondrous *way* of escape in every case, but let God have his own way and trust thou in him! He prepared the monster to *swallow*, without *devouring*. He can prepare agents and results so that the very monster that seemed to have eaten you up shall prove to have only taken you in safe-keeping, to land you in due time on the shore! *A miracle of mercy!* Trust God outside of all that appears—beyond your fears, beyond your severest straits, beyond death and the grave. Hope in him, against hope; and in the midst of your crushing trials, and *after* your losses are even realized and your worst fears are proved less than the desolating reality, stand up and say, "Though I walk *in the midst* of trouble, thou wilt revive me, thou shalt stretch forth thine hand upon the wrath of mine enemies and thy right hand shall save me."

This, I confess, goes a great step beyond any common confidence among men. Here it *defies* a parallel in human society. Among men you will trust so long as there can be hope that what you fear will not come to pass! But when the worst that you dreaded is realized, how shall you trust in one whose hand is actually striking you down? "Trust in him *at all times*, ye people, pour out your hearts before him; God is a refuge for us; though he slay me, yet will I trust in him; behold the fowls of the air; consider the lilies." Who would say beforehand that the fowls could have their daily meals without storehouse or barn, without work or wages; or that the lilies could have raiment more splendid than Solomon's without care or cost. Nay, who would say that a man could actually have his food carried to him by ravens. Yet interpositions as marvellous as this have occurred, perhaps in our own knowledge—if not in our own history. "Because he hath inclined his ear unto me, therefore will I call upon him as long as I live."

Even Job, far back in the midst of patriarch times, had such an every-day trust. God answered him out of the whirlwind in tones as sweet as angels use. It was no mere theory—nothing dead, but *living*. There was a time for his trust when a whole procession of calamities had come apace and the bewildering news flashed like successive bolts of lightning upon him. Assassins slew his servants, the conflagration consumed his flocks, robbers stole his camels, and a hurricane swept

away his sons amidst the ruins of their house. And this patriarch, with his dim and narrow revelations of God and tempted by Satan and the world in that doleful hour when all was gone, when his earthly hopes were so successively and swiftly blasted, still sings in calmest confidence —"The Lord gave and the Lord hath taken away: blessed be the name of the Lord."

Ye men of Galilee who have boasted your faith on the shore, come out now upon the *Sea of Galilee* in the vessel; Christ is embarked with you, or he walks out on the boiling billows at the fourth watch of the night to look after you. And now you are thinking him asleep or you are imagining his heavenly form as it approaches to be some apparition haunting your darksome way; you are crying out in the gale as though he who comes to save you were some spirit of the storm, as though you had no Saviour, or as though he had not control of the elements which threaten to engulf your all, or as though he had turned to be a destroyer; or you fear your common ground of trusting will not stand you in this *present case;* and this shameful timidity is just what he rebukes, just what he wonders at, as he knows his infinite resources for your help. "Why are ye so fearful, O ye of little faith."

You think that the managing of your vessel is so much a mere mechanical matter that it is too purely a business concern for God Almighty to deal with, that it is just a thing of the helm, or that this surviving a financial storm is merely a

business of notes and banks and mercantile sagacity; just a matter between man and man, too secular for Jesus Christ to concern himself with. But did not this same Saviour think it worth working a miracle to enable Peter to pay his taxes—aye, to pay his own tax—rather than that his children or his cause should suffer discredit? And if he could make a fish come up to the apostle's hook, bearing the very coin that was needed, what bankers can he not command, how can his agencies ever fail, when can his deposits be exhausted, when shall his trusting servants be deserted by him?

The believer who comes upon his trying times—his times of temptation or apprehension or affliction or dissolution—remembers that these seasons are just those which his common every-day piety was all along girding itself for, that these severe conflicts are just what he was always given to expect, that his ordinary faith in fair weather was always strengthening to outride the tempest when it should come on, that it was training itself to grapple with the tempter and the monster when they should rise to do their worst, and so he is the overcomer at last, just by being a habitual daily overcomer.

What shall they do who are thinking it will be enough to talk of faith when the time of fear has come? If the dying thief had a stronger faith than was almost ever known, I assure you there was *need of it*—to have had its first exercise in the very struggle and agony of death—faith at such a crisis, for the first, is rather a miraculous grace, a

rare specimen just to illustrate in the brightest way that stupendous occasion on Calvary.

Trust not to such an hour. Your death-bed is not calm, when all your life of sin comes up against you, staring you in the face; when all your lifelong rejection of Christ is rising up to *forbid* your hope at the last hour; when your very inbred *habits of* unbelief seem not to allow of a calm confidence on such a sudden — at that outermost verge of life when the sinking spirits refuse to trust; when your own conscience within is full of accusations; when even the fever or the stupor of your disease shall be against any such act of the heart as demands a most collected, well advised, deliberate and strong application of all the energies; to trust, *then, for the first* "when the fear cometh as desolation and the destruction cometh as a whirlwind, when distress and anguish come upon you," would seem against all the laws of your being. It shall not be because God refuses to be gracious. Oh, no! It shall be rather because an affrighted, bewildered, sinking, perishing soul can not easily trust then for the first.

Behold, then, the high attainment of piety is here. "They that trust in the Lord shall be as Mount Zion which can not be moved." The Christian that has trusted Christ, in view of the last and worst of Satan's accusations—of death's struggles and of the dreadful bar itself—looks forward to the dying point and shouts beforehand, "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for thou art with me."

They who trust in frames and experiences rather than in the simple word of grace shall always have fears beyond any reach. Unless there is a hope for us as worthless sinners, we have no satisfying and sure consolation. Unless there is a ground of hope *without* us and *above* us we can find no firm foundation.

The Christian's fears drive him always to the same shelter and refuge. What new terror in death shall frighten him away from Christ? "I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels, nor principalities nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus, our Lord."

In many a fearful time, when providence has been all dark and actually adverse, the believer has stood up in the midst of trouble and thought of God's goodness covenanted to him, and of God's wisdom pledged to arrange for him; he ventures to believe *against all present appearances*, he dares think, amidst all that is inscrutable now, that there is a *good reason* with God for every grief or fear he suffers or shall suffer, and he is at peace. In his terrors he trusts, and this is the power of his confidence. What other trust can serve him? What *shall* the habitual unbeliever do in that extremity unpractised to any such reliance? To whom shall he go? Whither shall he seek for refuge?

You know not, my hearer, how hard it is to put away all natural impressions and in the darkest

hour to behold the Lamb of God whom you never would see in your brightest days—when you find that you have been all your life long spinning for yourself, and out of your own bosom, a death shroud, soft and silken it may be, like the silk-worm's, but, like its cocoon, a coffin. Tell the drowning man, who has never balanced himself in the waters, to do it now, when he is swept from the wreck into the boiling ocean, amidst his terrors and alarms; preach to him the whole theory, as you believe. Tell him to cease his strivings, to compose himself and lie down on the bosom of the flood, and set his face steadfastly towards heaven and float upon the wave. Can he do it? Oh, no! He will likely enough cry out in his alarm and strangle in the act. He will struggle and go down in the attempt. He can not trust now for the first amidst such swelling billows and such desolating fears.

Practice in your calmest times this heavenly art of trusting Christ, the great Redeemer, and then you can say, "*What time I am afraid*, instead of desponding, shrinking, fretting, despairing, I will sweetly compose my soul in God, and, casting my all on the bosom of thy covenant, *I will trust in thee.*"

# XIV.

## NO PERSONAL SALVATION EXCEPT BY PERSONAL SANCTIFICATION.

"Peter saith unto him: Thou shalt never wash my feet! Jesus answered him: If I wash thee not thou hast no part with me. Simon Peter saith unto him: Lord, not my feet only, but also my hands and my head."—JOHN xiii. 8–9.

Our blessed Lord had come, with the twelve, to sit down at the Last Paschal Supper, which was to introduce his betrayal and death. What does he say and do, that best befits such an occasion? He speaks a parable in the act. Condescending love could find no earthly picture wherewith to express itself, for there was never an instance like this. He rises from the table, before proceeding with the feast, comes to his disciples, one by one—comes girt with a towel, in the garb of a servant, and proposes to wash their feet. You know the sequel. Our Lord came to Simon Peter. This impetuous and noble apostle declined the service as a thing quite too humiliating for his Master to do—too humiliating for him to accept from his Lord. Jesus insisted, and even made it a condition of his saving grace, that this very thing here proposed, and whatsoever he proposed for any of his people, should be accepted at his hands. This brings Pe-

ter to terms. He could hold out no longer. He sees it in a new light. It is no mere courtesy, no mere formality, it is absolute necessity and he yields most cordially, most fully, in the language of our text—"Lord, not my feet only, but also my hands and my head."

View the picture, my brethren. It is a scene for us all to contemplate. There are lessons for us all to learn. Jesus has a plan for the thorough cleansing of each disciple. He proposes for each of us, in all the minutiæ of life, his divers methods for our most entire personal sanctification. By various means of grace and various dealings of providence, he comes round to each and urges upon us his cleansing processes. We are often inclined to take exception here and there to this and that, but we have no right to object to any thing he proposes for us. He insists upon each item as indispensable to our salvation, and what he will bring each of us to, if we are saved, is just this whole-hearted concurrence with him in his whole scheme and system of grace; so that we shall earnestly pray—"Lord, not my feet only, but also my hands and my head."

Look now at the infinite condescension of Jesus in this work of our sanctification. To rescue us from the bondage of sin, the first step he takes is that wonderful leap, just at one bound, from the highest heaven to the lowest condition of earth. "He took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men." "And being found in fashion as a man," he took the most ab-

ject state of our humanity. "He humbled himself" below all ordinary condition of humankind and "became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross." And when you say, that this was to save men from hell, do you not understand that there is *no possibility of personal salvation except by personal sanctification?* Nay, that salvation itself, properly understood, is just this sanctification itself. That therefore, you are in the way of being saved, only as you are in the way of being sanctified; and that hence all the questions about election, predestination and personal salvation do, in their practical aspect, turn upon this living question, of personal sanctification; and that so God's eternal decrees of salvation, are really indicated and brought to light by our habitual actions, and that he is plainly an elect man, and only he, who elects Christ for his Saviour and who has thus the mark of sanctification on the forehead of his daily living.

And so it is that this profound doctrine, which so many stumble at, is everywhere presented in the Scriptures, in its living, practical connections. This very Peter says, in his epistle, after he has here been made to understand the doctrine well, "Elect, according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Christ." Not elect unto eternal life, do what you will. No! elect unto obedience. Ah! this is the brand by which the Good Shepherd marks his sheep, with a monogram of both initials in one—"My sheep

hear my voice, I know them and they follow me," and so it comes to pass that they shall never perish. So you may know them from all others. So said Paul, "I bear in my body, the marks of the Lord Jesus."

Look now at this condescending kindness of our Lord, in pressing upon you his work of sanctification. When he comes to you, and you are found so reluctant to accept his method, see him still following you up in life, plying you with every new motive; visiting you with tender warnings, earnest reproofs and rebukes of his providence; hedging you in so from your cherished sins, begging and entreating you to accept his grace of cleansing in all particulars of daily life. This is his menial attitude, girt with a towel and pouring water into the bason and coming to you with the entreaty that you would allow him to wash your feet.

But as regards the methods. They seem to us arbitrary often, and unnecessary, and we demur.

Look here at the significance of this transaction, the water-washing—true it is, at most, a sign of something greater and better that is signified. Is the sign then so necessary? So you say of the sacraments: "May you not be a Christian, and yet not be baptized or partake of the Lord's Supper?" But Jesus says, "If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with me." If you set up your own opinion and feeling in regard to this water-washing, you do, in effect, repudiate the whole scheme of grace and claim to accept or reject as you think fit. No!

If you accept not this very thing, which I here propose in the sign, you do, in effect, repudiate the thing signified. We can not be saved by a mere creed or profession of religion, any more than we can be warmed by the picture of a fire.

But let us look further at the significance of this action. I say to you, all and each of you, Christ has a plan for your personal cleansing, complete in all its details. You can not afford to reject it in any minute particular. It is not for you to pronounce any thing trivial or unnecessary in his plan for you. He knows what you need and wherein you lack, and he comes to you—Peter, James, or John—comes with his own chosen methods of cleansing—"Then cometh he to Simon Peter"—and then he comes in his round of the ages to you, my brethren, and he begins with each here, at the feet. And this is daily needful and indispensable, though you may have been regenerated at heart. Here he comes in this symbolical transaction. He has himself explained it. He says, "He that is washed or bathed, needeth not save to wash his feet." So the man who is regenerated needs yet to have his daily corruptions washed away by daily processes of sanctification. The man who deems the gracious work accomplished for himself, at the outset, by the regenerating act, and has not waked up to consider how he needs this same cleansing efficacy reapplied from day to day, he must be aroused from his terrible mistake or he is lost!

Are you considering it enough to be a Chris-

tian in the general and not in the particular, or to have been a Christian once, if not now? or are you claiming that this Christianity shall not come down to the minutiæ of your life and control your habits, in the smallest items, and regulate all your intercourse and sway all your tempers and your speech and restrict your indulgences and set up its throne in your whole living, so as that every thought shall be brought into captivity to the obedience of Christ? Then, there is your fatal mistake. There is where you have failed to be a pronounced and recognized Christian, because you have not carried your religion into the minor details of life. You have thought it beneath the Master to come down to so common and menial a business as to wash your feet. And just because you do not think it worth your while to act upon Christian principle in such common every-day matters, no man can see where you are acting on Christian principle at all. You say this or that indulgence, this or that prevarication or overreaching is innocent, and Jesus does not concern himself with such trivial things. "I can do this or that, go hither or thither, as I please." And so you say, at the first blush of the subject, "Thou shalt never wash my feet."

But these defilements that are contracted in the common paths of life, this whole question of what you say and do, and whither you go, and into what dust and dirt of the street you wilfully tread, is a question of prodigious moment. It involves your business enterprises and dealings, your asso-

ciations in life, your private habits and social practices—all your course and intercourse. Alas! for the daily misadventures of men, whom we must regard as true Christians. Here is the great practical work for the church membership, which Jesus sees most needful to be done—this personal sanctification and correction, in view of these indiscretions and inconsistencies and iniquities of good men—their evil speech, evil example, divers denials and betrayals of the Master; their wrong-doings in business, in the family, in society, in the church. We need even at our communion table to have Jesus come round with towel and bason and wash the feet, even of the chief disciple.

You object to your religion coming down to all this detail; you say, "This or that is not sinful, good men do it; to be so rigorous is excessive: Christ does not concern himself with such small matters." But this is just where he insists, and will take no denial. It is to wash your feet. You say that to carry religion into all these particulars of your common walk is carrying it quite too far, and virtually you protest, "Thou shalt never wash my feet. You may wash others' feet, but not mine." And well and truly does the Saviour reply, "If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with me."

I venture to say that no man can get to heaven whose Christian course does not often propose to him some self-denial for the example's sake. Grant that this thing or that thing may be abstractly innocent—innocent in itself. But is it relatively in-

nocent? Is it such a thing as you, a Christian man, can safely hold up and commend as an example to all others? Has not your religion gone so far as to restrict your feet, your going hither and thither, or to prompt your avoiding this or that, on account of the example? Can any Christian man, in this wicked world, surrounded by others who are watching him and pleading him as a pattern in questionable matters, claim to act independently, on his own view of what is lawful for himself, and regardless of the influence he may exert upon others? What a monstrous mistake! Can any man allow himself to go hither or thither, to do this or that, on the presumption that he will not be seen and that hence his example will be out of the question? What a delusion! A man may escape observation where he goes to do good, but he can not escape notice where he goes to do evil.

And then this question of foot-washing, the cleansing of the feet which Jesus proposes for each of us, lies mainly just here, here amidst this whole circle of things which men call indifferent and which some claim to regard as outside of the sphere of this religion. And the Christian, who is not watchful of his path, who does not admit Christ to do this work of divine cleansing upon his daily goings, who is not heedful of the defilements which are daily contracted by the way, who is not jealous of his walk and anxious about it, to have it perfectly immaculate and to have all his living, even in smallest particulars, sanctified; he

has not yet waked up to the higher ideas of the Christian life.

And this brings us to the second main point of our text. There is a higher style of Christian living than most in the church are found to adopt. Jesus comes with towel and water, to each of us, to do this further needful work of additional purification. What say you my brethren? Do you admit the necessity? or do you take exception and object and wilfully protest, where the way is distressing or inconvenient? Do you pretend that it is an indignity for Jesus to concern himself with these small matters of yours? But the principle he lays down here is that nothing whatever which he proposes can be trivial or indifferent to you—nothing which he has prescribed, nothing in the whole sphere of personal dealing, however minute, can be refused by you if you would be saved. And there is a point where every true Christian is brought up upon this higher platform, and abjuring all such laxity as he had entertained is led to say, "Lord, not my feet only, but also my hands and my head."

The idea here involved is, that our daily defilements, contracted in our worldly intercourse, need to be daily cleansed by these processes of grace. If you have overlooked this, you have omitted a large item in the plan of salvation. This whole business of foot-washing concerns our habits of piety and our progress in the divine life. Just as the Jew could not eat his meal without his ceremonial ablutions, so every Christian is under daily

necessity of the divine cleansing. Just as the bather, coming out of the surf, needs to have the sand washed from his feet, for his entire cleansing, so there is this daily supplementary work to be done upon the best Christian living.

Have you waked up to this, my brother? Do you see Jesus stooping in such infinite condescension, asking to wash your feet? Then your daily prayer is, for more entire conformity to the divine image and will, for a holier course of living, for a more strict and exemplary and unimpeachable walk in life, for a more thorough avoidance of even questionable wrong, that your feet may tread, at every step, the shining path to heaven, and that they may not go where the way is slippery and where the road is anywise connected with the downward track to destruction.

There are errands of love and mercy enough for the feet of the disciples of Christ, and it is part of the Christian armor to have "your feet shod with the preparation of the Gospel of peace." "Blessed is the man who walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly"—does not adopt their maxims, nor take their advice—"nor standeth in the way of sinners"—is not found in their association or connection—"nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful"—does not consort or company with them in their pursuits—"But his delight is in the law of the Lord: he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water: whatsoever he doeth shall prosper." Come up, then, my brethren, to this higher Christian platform, to covet this daily sanctifying process, to put aside

all exceptions and reserves that shall debar the thorough and perfect working of Christ's plan for your cleansing, to consider the path of your feet and have all your goings established, and to invoke, in your daily prayer, this gracious work of Christ upon your daily walk. "Lead me not into temptation, but deliver me from evil." Let him wash your feet. If not, you perish!

But the true disciple is brought, like Peter, to a larger comprehension of Christ's plan for his salvation. It is not merely a salvation at last that he is led to crave—as many pray "save us at last"—but the great idea is, to be saved at present and just now. It is not a mere foot-washing that he begs —as many who would have their feet well cared for and who are all correct and strict as to their outward proprieties, always found at church and never in places of wicked or hurtful association, as though their blameless but negative walk before men would save them, as though it were enough to be professing Christians—but it is an entire sanctification that is besought—feet and hands and head. And it is just a lively conception of Christ's condescending, dying love to sinners and to us, which brings us to put off our laxity and to come into harmony with his gracious plan in our case. It is when we see him taking this menial garb and performing these menial offices, all to purify and cleanse us—all to bring us up to some true estimation of our need and of his scheme for our redemption—it is then that we gain a wholly new conception of our case and of his claims and

of our obligations; of what we may do, of what we ought to do, of what we fail to do, of what he has taught and patterned for us to do, and of what (God helping us) we may hope to do, and we cry out, "Lord, not my feet only, but also my hands and my head."

And especially, when the divine Master comes in his tender love and with his sanctifying method, and represents to us the indispensable necessity of this daily cleansing to our soul's salvation, and we are led to see that if he wash us not we have no part with him; when he shows us how foreign our thoughts are from his thoughts, and our ways from his ways; what poor conceptions we have of our need, how we are swayed by what others say and do more than by what he requires; it is then, when we see that our dealing must be with him as the Judge of quick and dead, and that we can not hope to get to heaven except in his prescribed methods and by his gracious offices, day by day; it is then that we beg for a sanctification of all our powers and all our activities and energies and opportunities—"Lord, not my feet only, but also my hands and my head."

But we are prone to misunderstand and misinterpret his dealings and so we object. He comes to us in some affliction, and we do not see how it is for our cleansing from some defilement of our walk, how he comes girt with a towel, comes with bason and water, just to do us this loving service. We think it all severity. We think it the work of a hard master, but it is the work of a faithful

friend and servant. We misconstrue the dealing altogether. It is some loss, some disappointment, some bereavement, some heart-breaking trouble. Can it be that this is Jesus come to wash our feet, just in order that we may have part with him? Is this his voice out of the whirlwind—"If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with me?" This tribulation that unsettles us at our table, that stirs up our nest, that is so full of distress and deprivation to us, that we can not see the need of it in our case, at least that it should come in this form; that altogether contradicts many of our common cherished ideas of what is good for us; is this Jesus in servant's garb, come to wash our feet for the table of the Lord? Then be it so and blessed be the name of the Lord. And so understood, then when he presses to our lips this bitter cup of sorrow, we may hear him say, "This cup is the New Testament in my blood; drink it in remembrance of me."

What is the secret of our inefficiency as Christians? It is that we erect for ourselves artificial and unauthorized standards of duty and we are not willing to be undeceived. We cleave to our own selfish methods. We take our guage of religious living from the fair average around us. We want just to stand within the outer edge and circumference of the discipleship, so as not to be left out at the last day. But we set before us no such pattern as Jesus Christ; we aim at no such thing as to reach the very utmost of Christian service. It is too much with us a task work, or a

formality, and not a labor of love. We are not hungering and thirsting after righteousness, as for daily food; we are not wholly consecrated in all our walk and work, in all our course and intercourse; and what is worse, we do not count it necessary that we should be. We will wash ourselves in our own way and not be washed by Jesus, in his way.

But this whole matter of personal and habitual sanctification, a sanctification which is not merely commercial and social, but spiritual and individual, involves actual dealing with him, daily prayer to him and for his sake and in his name.

Let us consider what is meant by this sanctifying of *our hands*. It is not only to have our hands cleansed from actual sin, to have clean hands in all our living and dealing—clean from corruptions of trade, from fraud and deceit and overreaching in daily intercourse; it is to have all our industry and our business turned to the account of the Master. Jesus was a carpenter; and so he sanctified all industrial pursuits. He taught us by that lowly work at Nazareth how honorable and dignified is any industrial calling, if it be pursued in his name and in God's service.

I have stood there in Nazareth, where tradition points out the site of Joseph's shop, and I have wondered how the hands that touched the bier of the widow's dead son at Nain, and stopped the funeral train to give the boy back to his mother, could have wrought in boyhood at that common trade of men; or how the same hands that touched

the blind eyes and brought the sight again to the dead eyeballs of Bartimeus could have driven the nails of the carpenter and handled those rude implements of the mechanic—the same hands that were nailed fast to the cross for us. But the greater wonder is, how every stroke of his humble trade was sanctified as much as the agony of Gethsemane or the winged errand of an angel.

And this is the true Christian ambition—to have all his daily work, whatever he turns his hand to, hallowed and consecrated to Christ.

We all know what it is to be working for parents or for brothers and sisters; and then, by a higher step, we know what it is to be working for wife and children in all that we do; and here, by a step still higher, to be working for Jesus, in all our daily doings—to have all the busy toil of the week sanctified and dedicated to his service, to have our hands set to no work, however common, without invoking his blessing and bringing to his feet the well-earned gains. This comes from Christ's washing of the hands.

And then, besides having our business done for Christ, to find Christ's business that we can do and are called to do—to set our hands to such work as we may do for the perishing; busily gathering in the wandering, reaching out the hand of charity to the destitute, scattering the word of life in the Bible or the tract or the Sabbath-school, building up the church and supporting the cause of Christ in the world; Christian men toiling, Christian women plying the needle in aid of the

missionary work, and Christian children bringing in their tribute for the service of Christ. This is noble. This is what we need. This is what we pray for, when we beg that Jesus would wash our hands as well as our feet.

And when the hands are washed by Christ—when his divine grace, applied to them, sanctifies their doings—then they are opened to deeds of liberality and Christian charity. The hands can not be washed without being opened. It is not possible for Christ himself to wash the hands of the close-fisted, without *opening* them to a larger bounty and to a more liberal bestowment of worldly goods for his cause and kingdom.

Men may take exception to this, may plead that this religion is a thing of the *heart*, and has nothing to do with the pocket. But look at Zaccheus, the converted publican, who recognizes at once Christ's claim upon his means. "Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor." This is his profession now. This, he says, is what I now propose to do. Not I *have done* this in time past. This would be to boast of what he had been and what he had done, which is the farthest from his thoughts. So far from this, he proposes to do his utmost to undo the past. "If I have taken any thing from any man, by false accusation"—as he had done, enriching himself by extortion in the tax-gathering—"I restore unto him *fourfold*."

And yet more, this higher Christian living calls for Christ's sanctifying methods to be applied also

to *our heads.* It is not enough even to have the new heart, if that be all. New hands and feet and head are needed. Grace in the heart is often very slow in reaching to the hands and the head, so as to pervade all the active living. Some men cleave so to their old notions, do not wish their opinions interfered with, dispute minor points, lay claim to a large liberty of thinking and action that is not directed and dictated by the Gospel. And there are imaginations that need to be cast down and there are high thoughts that exalt themselves against the knowledge of God which need to be brought into captivity to the obedience of Christ.

And this sanctification of the head is the great demand of our day. Free thinking and laxity of doctrine work laxity of living. Besides, to have the head sanctified involves the cleansing of all the senses, as of all the sentiment—the eye sanctified with all its seeing, the ear with all its hearing and the lips with all their speech and conversation. This is the high idea of our religion. Opinions need to be sanctified. And the daily thinking and planning and calculating need to be sanctified. And men's pride of intellect and selfish claim of judging for themselves needs to be humbled, not before mere church authority, but before the holy Scriptures and before God. And when, like Peter, we are ready to dispute Christ's methods of grace, or when we think the means of grace which he has appointed for us in his word are unnecessary for us; when we think that the Bible may be dispensed with or the

prayer-meeting or the Sabbath service or the sacraments, and imagine that we can get to heaven without them, then Jesus will insist, "If I wash thee not, feet and hands and head, thou hast no part with me."

When you see a man planning for Christ as he plans for his business, studying how he can best advance his cause and push forward every enterprise for the Master, studying how he can best stir up others to co-operate and how he can best reach and influence for good the neglected and perishing, there you know the head, as well as the hands and the feet, has been cleansed by Jesus. There you know the sanctifying power has gone to the brain and has set all the busy thought in motion for care and painstaking in the work of Christ. And when you see such a merchant or such a mechanic or day-laborer sanctified in all his activities, from head to foot, and manifestly giving himself, heart and soul, to the Master, there you see a power in the world!

The amount of good that one man can accomplish, when fired by the love of Christ, even though his intellect or talents be not great, nor his social position exalted, is simply incalculable. Such an one as Harlan Page, who used to stand in the great city almost alone in the annals of lay-workers, is having a noble band of successors in our day. And the world will never be converted until private Christians shall go out to publish the Gospel in their sphere—until men and women in the church membership shall count it their high call-

ing to make known this great salvation to the world around.

It was never meant to be the work of the minister alone, as one of a thousand, but of the minister, as ordained to the holy office, for a leader and guide of the people, in this great work. It is impossible that he should bear the burden alone, or do justice to the field alone, or make successful onset upon the foes of God and man, single-handed and alone. The church membership are too much excusing themselves, as if they had employed the minister for this and could decline the personal responsibility of laboring for Christ. But the substance of all the commandments is a love to God from every man, which shall engage all the heart and all the soul and all the mind and all the strength.

And if this is the necessary ruling of God's moral law from the beginning, how can there be any less requirement under the blaze of the Gospel and in the light of the cross of Christ. When the living, loving Christ comes down to you and to me, as he came to Simon Peter, and claims the privilege of washing our feet and sanctifying all our walk and all our work, woe to the man who resists—who disputes the wisdom, or expediency or dignity of such an office. Then he shall hear from the Master, in words like the thunder of the judgment-day —"If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with me." And blessed is he who will answer—"Lord, not my feet only, but also my hands and my head."

# XV.

## MODERN INDIFFERENTISM.

"And Gallio cared for none of these things."—Acts xviii. 17.

The progress of the Gospel in the world develops individual character. Whether in or out of the church, men are sifted and searched by the presence of this religion of Christ. Just as a chemical test will disclose the presence of poison in the blood or tissues, even of a dead subject; or just as the same test will tell you of the metal, whether it is pure; or just as the fire will bring the gold, glistening in sunny globules, from the dark ore—so this divine religion brings men forth to the light and reveals their inner selves, and exhibits their tastes and affinities. So said the aged Simeon, in the Temple, with Jesus in his arms—"This child is set for the fall and rising again of many in Israel, that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed."

The truth of God in the world produces conflict. It is no fault of the truth, but only of the error, which it is called to confront and overcome. Controversy must attend the promulgation of what is right amidst a world of wrong, and of what is good amidst a world of evil. Men accuse Chris-

tianity of all this *controversy*, not considering that it is only the introduction of daylight that battles with a world of darkness, and that sends wild beasts howling to their dens. It was in this aspect of the case, that Jesus himself said, "Think not that I am come to send peace on earth. I came not to send peace, but a sword." And yet the sword which he wields is plainly in the interest of universal peace.

In the apostolic history before us the Gospel was making its way, amidst surrounding heathenism, from the capital of Judea to the metropolis of the world. Look at the characters which are brought out at every point, in every city and village; some falling in with its glorious revelations and joining the ranks of its publishers and advocates, others ranging violently in the opposition, denouncing its doctrines and persecuting its friends. In this paragraph that records the success of the Word in the Grecian Peninsula, and in the great city of Corinth, here are Aquila and Priscilla—humble refugees from Rome—day-laborers at the trade of tent-making—becoming converts and boon companions of Paul; and there is Apollos, a learned and eloquent scholar of Alexandria, giving his high talent to the exposition of the truth, yet sitting at the feet of these tent-makers, to hear the word of God expounded more perfectly. And here is the crowd of false religionists, dragging Paul before a heathen tribunal, while even the heathen multitude range on his side, in sympathy with the noble-minded, persecuted Christian. And here is *Gallio*,

the heathen judge on the bench, pronouncing all the controversy trivial in the eye of the law, and hastily, summarily dismissing it as a mere quibble —or logomachy—a dispute of words and names, and involving no great question of practical right, to be recognized at his tribunal. It is not *Gallio* as a judge, or an officer of state, with whom we have here to do, but *Gallio* as a representative of a prevalent *indifferentism* to whom we direct your attention.

This religion of Jesus Christ is still, in its passage through the world, the same as proclaimed at that day, only with vastly increased and accumulating testimonies from all the generations. This Christianity presents itself at the bar of every man's reason and conscience. And he *must* give it a *hearing*, or drive it from his judgment-seat. The man who looks it fairly in the face, and even attempts an examination of its claims, and reports adversely, and calls himself an unbeliever, for reasons which he assigns and vindicates, is nevertheless, on his own ground, open to conviction, and may hear the case pleaded again at the bar of private, personal judgment, and may be won over, eventually, to its embrace. But the man who is simply *indifferent*, and can not be detained for a hearing of the case, and on one plea or another summarily dismisses it, as not a question at his bar, he is the most hopeless of all. Infidelity, however it may have entrenched itself with sophistries and fortified itself with arguments, is still bound to hear the case reargued in open court. But the *indifferentism* that

dismisses it altogether, and drives it from the judgment-seat, puts itself out of the sphere of its high doctrines and strong arguments, and may be written *hopeless*, even beyond its avowed opposers.

The type of indifferentism in our day is still that of the heathen mind, as exhibited in *Gallio*. This man was the brother of the great Roman scholar, *Seneca*, and was held in high repute as a judicious administrator and sound thinker. And here, in his verdict, that was no verdict at all, is only the *highest judgment* of Christianity from the heathen point of view. And on precisely similar grounds men of Christian communities among us, are every day dismissing this great subject and banishing it from their consideration, and they are thus evincing the same heathen instincts and tendencies; they are in effect ranging themselves, in their practical judgment, with this heathen Gallio; they are showing themselves, under these Christian influences of our day, to have made no advance, beyond that dark and dismal age of human thought and religious inquiry in which the world was shrouded in paganism. It is all to them as if Jesus Christ had never come, as if the light of this glorious Gospel had never dawned upon the earth.

Let us analyze the heathenism here in the case of Gallio. His plea for dismissing the subject of religion altogether from his tribunal is, that it is not a question of wrong-doing, or of actual flagrant crime, but a question of words and names, and of Jewish law, with which he had nothing to do. So says Pilate—"Am I a Jew?"

Look at the heathenism of our popular literature, that treats the subject of religion in the same summary way of contempt, ignoring the claims of Christianity as a religion of the past or as merely the business of its professional advocates—of ministers and of church members—as well enough, perhaps, for those who have so committed themselves, but as of no consequence for independent thinkers. That, as between one religion or another, Judaism, Mohammedanism, Buddhism, or Christianity, it is a mere question *of words*, or *of names*, of definitions or of creeds and confessions—but nothing worthy any one's painstaking, to unravel the mysteries, or to solve the doubts.

But let it be understood, this is the *heathenism* of our modern thinking—of "advance thinkers," as they please to call themselves—who pride themselves on *progress*, and are only going back to the dark and dreary heathenism that had no Christ and no hope for eternity to illumine the midnight darkness. "If it were a question of *wrong!*" he says. And this is the heathen morality, that would separate right and wrong altogether from a revealed religion, and would therefore follow brute instincts, and fall back upon *natural tastes* and *appetites* as the only rule of faith and practice. Who does not discern, through all this mist evolved from modern speculation by the conjury of this genius of heathenism, all the orgies of idolatry, and all the abominations of pagan rites and practices, coming back upon us in the new social system?

On our frontiers, in our new settlements—away

from the constraints of these divine Scriptures, where bold adventurers have made their way to set up their new systems, and plant the standards of their false faith, on the plea of progressive thought and liberal doctrine—you see *heathenism*, restored with all the depravities of Mormonism, superstition, or spiritualism, in various forms.

And our polished magazine literature, that affects so contemptuously to set aside this religion of Christ, is simply a *revived heathenism*. Let the writers be adjudged to their proper place. They have not anywise advanced beyond Plato, and Socrates, and Seneca.

Is it not history? Was it not long ago put to the proof and ascertained—demonstrated in the wisdom and providence of God—that "the world *by wisdom* knew not God," that *worldly wisdom*, which in its highest estate, without Christianity, is heathen, so far from attaining to the knowledge of God, attained to *ignorance* of God—to Polytheism, Pantheism and base idolatry; to flat and outright denial of God. And is it not proven most conclusively, that to blot out Christ and Christianity is to blot out the sun from the heavens, and to make the knowledge of God impossible to men?

If now, we pursue the modern indifferentism more closely, we shall find that it is traceable to various forms of this heathen *prejudice*. It is a prejudice, which *refuses* any fair and patient *investigation of religious truth*, which declines any earnest study of the documents of our faith, but which, just at the threshold of all inquiry, rules

the whole subject out of court—denying the jurisdiction, resolving it into mere quibbles of language, or disputes of divines, or conflicts of divers religions.

You say you can not deal with these doctrinal, theological questions; if it were a question of right or wrong, then you could reasonably judge and act. But these are the highest themes of human inquiry. They enter into every-day affairs of men. Is it not a question of *wrong?* Great God! what is wrong, if it is not wrong to neglect and deny thee; and what is right, if it is not right to love and serve thee? Conscience—that *arbiter* within you—testifies to the prodigious wrong of neglecting the soul, and refusing the claims of God, and ignoring the final tribunal, and despising the divine grace. Is it not a question of wrong, that forces itself upon you as responsible creatures, conscious of that responsibility, and even recognizing the truth of Christianity, but rejecting its high obligations? Even coming hither to the sanctuary, and receiving its messages, but utterly disregarding their personal application. "What is the chief end of man?" "What is sin?" "What is God?" Are not these fair questions?

This prejudice takes other and peculiar shapes, in certain instances. In some one of your minds it may define itself as a prejudice against certain church members, whom you have known. And so, you will have nothing to do with the church, or with Christianity. As if a prejudice against certain physicians, or quackeries, or against their

patients even, should decide you to have nothing to do with the healing art of medicine. Can you not take a thought further and ask, what you will do when you are seized with some alarming sickness? All this indifference may answer you today, while you are well, *and so well* as to think foolishly that you can never be sick. But when death comes knocking at your door, with all the symptoms of fatal malady—what then? All the absurdities and inconsistencies of this or that practitioner, or all your impressions against them as a class, or against this or that school of medicine, will not hinder you from availing yourself of whatever aid any of them can give you, in your hour of awful disease and pain and death.

Or, you are prejudiced against the *sects.* And you see and hear so much of controversy, and that so sharply and shamefully conducted, evincing so little of a Christian spirit—one party or interest persecuting another, and making party name or usage to be more than Christianity itself. The doctrine is promulgated that the state is secular; that religion has no business with the state, and the state has no business with religion. And so it is loudly claimed that there shall be no oaths in court, no chaplains under the government, no Sabbath legalized, *no Bible in the public schools* and no religion. But this is irreligion—*false* religion. And this *irreligion* is sectarian, bitterly and boldly sectarian.

Take all the opposing forces in the great controversy and is not Judaism sectarian, and Romanism?

And is not infidelity *a sect* with its organizations, its preaching, and its schools? And is this arrant heathenism to be rolled in upon us under the guise of secularizing our public institutions under the state? God forbid!

But, therefore, you will have nothing to do with the subject. And is it thus that you set aside questions of political party, and great vital questions of government? Will you have no government because some secretaries or Congressmen are corrupt? Will you dismiss the whole matter, and form no opinion on the case in hand? Ah! I see you eagerly canvassing the *news*, eagerly poring over the arguments *pro* and *con*, and yourselves joining in the controversies. And you judge the controversies to be vital. And you do not hasten to pronounce against the laws of the land, because the sense and bearing of them may be sharply disputed. No! You do not decide for anarchy, because government among a free people has always led to strife of opinion, and even to conflicts at arms! *Oh, no!*

But another type of the present prevalent indifferentism is traceable to mere *secularity*.

Business-men are found ignoring altogether this momentous subject, because it is not in the line of their secular, commercial pursuits. To them it is quite an outside matter. No time to attend to it, no disposition to take it up. Just as little relish for the inquiry as many a farmer or day-laborer would have for inquiring into "the chemistry of the sunbeam." You rule us out of court therefore.

You will not entertain these vital questions. You are prone to say, it is a question of *words* or of *names*, of doctrines or denominations. And, therefore, you are caring for none of the doctrines, and you are joining yourself in good earnest to *none* of the denominations. Pity that a man should starve because he can not decide what is the healthiest food, or should perish in a wreck because there are several life-boats launched, and he can not choose between them. But you are perishing of indifference.

You say, if it were a question of *wrong*—that is, of wrong such as a business-man has to deal with —wrong dealing in trade—or a question of government wrong, of taxes and tariffs, or a question of violated mercantile obligations; if it were a question of any such practical moment, *then*, *indeed*, reason would, that you should bear with us.

And is this, then, the high service to which *reason* is confined, and is this the noble function of man's divinest attribute, to occupy itself only with the decimal fractions of profit and loss, only with the system of trade and banking; to give up the immortal soul to buying and selling, until *the soul itself is sold in the markets*, as a chattel in the shambles? Are these, then, the highest themes of thought? And must nothing else claim superior attention? And is it so, indeed, as the term would seem to indicate, that, in this secular age and among practical men, high intellectual and religious *speculation* is crowded out by speculation in the markets? *Will a man rob God?*

The entire substance of many a man's creed is, that "Honesty is the best policy," which, analyzed, may mean merely that, in the long run, it pays best to be honest; that as a *stroke of policy* it is *best*—is found to *turn out* best for one's character and influence, and standing as a business-man; but that apart from *policy* it is nothing. We preach to you the Gospel of Christ, and you seem to say, "Give us some practical business question and we will hear you. But these questions of *words and names*—of *justification*, adoption, and sanctification, of *free grace* and repentance and *God and Christ;* these questions of religious law, or these questions of church—one church or another—where no business interest is involved; we must be excused from these."

And then, indeed, is the church nothing, or worth nothing more than the cost? Nothing to the commonwealth and community and city, nothing to yourself, and your family? And is not this a question of eminent practical account? Does it not fairly involve and underlie all business questions and calculations? Ye practical men—business-men—I ask you, is not here the great fundamental question of securities, the very *bottom* fact of all bonds and all mortgages and all endorsements? If you do not save society from rottenness by this religion of Christ, can you save your houses, or your claims, or your goods, or your deposits?

And what shall I say of this indifferentism when it appears in *woman*—she who, of all the race, is

most indebted to this Christianity; she whose sex has been so elevated and adorned by this religion, as compared with the heathen society in Gallio's time? That *woman*, made to be clinging and confiding, as the vine and its tendrils, should repudiate him who is the great *prop* of our humanity; she that is given over so often to damaging alliances, that she should disown this man of Bethany —this brother, husband, Jesus Christ—and should have her heart crushed by human treacheries, for lack of such a Partner and Bosom Friend. That woman, whose nature and ambition it is to shine in society, should disregard God's direction how to shine, as the firmament, and as the stars, forever and ever, by turning many to righteousness; that woman, whose nature is so ready to acknowledge and requite favors with hearty gratitude, should disdain to confess Christ and his dying love; grateful to friends and benefactors, only not grateful to this Jesus; that woman, whose brightest examples in history are the *Marys*, last at the cross and first at the sepulchre, whom the dying Lord last recognized from his cross and to whom the risen Saviour first appeared at the sepulchre — that *she* should show no interest in him nor listen to his recognition by name; nay, that even with the seal of baptism upon her forehead, she should not bow to him, nor confess him as her Lord—this is the most astounding—that she should bow her consecrated head to *mammon*, and yield herself a devotee to the world, and give up her soul to vanity, till it is hardened irrevocably against all the truth of

God and heaven! This is incredible — horrible! *But it is so!*

And yet the Marys, and the women that followed him from Galilee, and the daughters of Jerusalem, are types of a large class — blessed be God! I see hardened *men* passing by the cross and wagging their heads, but the *women* smite upon their breasts, bewailing and lamenting him, and they keep guard at his sepulchre, and they bring spices to embalm his corpse.

Alas! for the woman whose chief ornament, amidst all the parade and display of life, is lacking—must always be lacking—till the soul finds its proper affinity and the life its proper radiance in Christ Jesus. She can least of all afford to bring back upon us the barbarities of heathenism. And yet, when these great questions of Christianity are brought to the bar of her judgment, I see her often, like Gallio, dismissing them from her tribunal as matters with which she has nothing to do. If it were a question of social wrong, according to the etiquette and conventionalities of the day, she would call it reasonable to enter into it with zest and interest.

And is this, then, the debasement of woman's reason, in this Christian land, amidst these sanctuaries?—the reason of the butterfly, to so pronounce the body more than the soul, grace of manner more than graces of the spirit, and Christ and the judgment mere empty words and names?

My hearers, you will bear with us, if we plainly declare that all this popular indifferentism of our

day, which often prides itself in learning or practical wisdom, has its ground in IGNORANCE.

This heathen Gallio was totally ignorant of Christianity. And so he most inconsiderately and rashly drove these men and all their religious questions from his tribunal. And he was even ignorant of the direct and immediate bearing of his decision. In deciding to ignore the right, he inaugurated violence and crime. For at once, the multitude, emboldened by his heathen ruling, rushed upon the Jewish leaders, and beat them in the very presence of the judgment-seat. And there, at once, was a question of wrong and of flagrant crime, which it behooved him to recognize at court. Only, if you banish religion as a matter of trivial concern, then you must entertain the whole list of criminal questions, as they rush for adjudication, from the mobs of unrestrained violence.

Look at Pilate, the proud Roman procurator, who can have nothing to do with what he deems a mere idle Jewish controversy—"Take ye him, and judge him according to your law." Pity upon his ignorance! Oh, if he knew that he has Jesus in hand, and that this Jesus is the glorious God-man, Son of God, the blessed impersonation of truth and love and law and order, then, instead of wildly asking, "What is truth?" he would have clasped him, like the aged Simeon, to his arms, and thrown around him the high protection of the Roman power. The Scripture itself says, "If the princes of this world had known, they would not have crucified the Lord of Glory."

And all this affected advance in *science*—has it discovered indeed that there is no God? It is only the *fool* who says it. And he says it only in his *heart*, ashamed if the profane and blasphemous atheism comes up to his lips! Is this, indeed, the dignity of true learning? Is this the nobleness of a highly cultivated and well furnished intellect? Are these the modern Magi, who come to Bethlehem, to turn Jesus out of the stable, when he has found no room in the inn? Lord Bacon has well said, "A little philosophy inclineth man's mind to atheism, but depth in philosophy bringeth men's minds about to religion." Sir Isaac Newton answered the whole host of free-thinkers, when he answered the infidel Halley, in those cutting words, "I have studied these things, and you have not." And so the late Dr. Hamilton profoundly remarked, "It is easy for a sciolist to be a sceptic; but it is not easy for a well-informed historian to reject the records of faith." But this air of indifferentism is, with many, only the thin disguise of a troubled soul.

Pilate, pacing the judgment-hall—restive, vacillating, with all his convictions on the side of Jesus, and yet swayed by the multitude to give him up to death—he is the type of such. Brought by this preached Gospel and by all these Christian institutions and ordinances and influences to confront Jesus face to face, they had rather he were off their hands, rather they had no verdict to render in his case. They would give no decision *against him*. They can take no responsibility *for* him.

Any public espousal of his cause they are not prepared for. They will only, as a last resort, let the mob take their course and crucify him, while they will wash their hands of the blood! They will take no active interest in his cause, amidst the prevailing clamor of his enemies, and they will flatter themselves that they have at least pronounced him *innocent.*

My hearers, the witness is within you, as part of your own souls, that these themes that we preach to you are the highest articles of truth, most worthy your immediate attention and embrace. Better postpone any other questions than postpone these. All other interests are questions of *names*, and *words*, and of *human laws.* But these are the questions of right and wrong, of good and evil, of happiness and misery, of life and death eternal. Reason, in the exercise of her highest function, protests that you shall postpone business and postpone pleasure, postpone health and wealth, postpone even the claims of home and friends, and let the *dead bury* their *dead*, while this grand, paramount question of the soul and of your relations to God shall be settled for time and eternity. Oh! when you shall stand before the judgment-seat of the universe, and shall find it to be the judgment-seat of Christ, then—if not before—when it is too late, *you will care for all of these things.*

# XVI.

## THE JOY OF GOD'S SALVATION.

"Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation, and uphold me with thy free spirit; then will I teach transgressors thy ways, and sinners shall be converted unto thee."—PSALM li. 12–13.

True religion in the heart and life is essentially a *well-spring* of joy. However it may have been misunderstood by the world, or misinterpreted even by its adherents in this respect, this is still its leading feature—that it is a *joy forever*. Not the mere sensational pleasure which is misnamed joy—an external, adventitious thing that comes and goes as the sunshine among the clouds—but a living principle, a quality of the new nature, which thus becomes a vital force and works out its glad results.

Did not angels, who are the very impersonations of happiness, declare it to be good tidings of *great joy?* And even the Man of Sorrows, who represented it on earth, did not he show himself to be also the Man of *Joys*, abounding in a deep, inward, inexhaustible peace—a peace that made him calm as the summer morning amidst implacable foes and in the very near prospect of a bitter crucifixion? And did he not pass up to heaven in the very act of blessing his people with peace—his own peace—in the very attitude of benediction,

with his high-priestly hands yet extended to indicate that this was the office-work he would carry on in glory—shedding down blessings on them, even as "*while he blessed* them, he was *parted from them*"?

Whence comes it that the world will shrink away from this Gospel of glad tidings as though it were *bad* tidings—decline its proposals of living pleasure and of *eternal* bliss as though it were nothing but privation, sacrifice, hardship, tears, and terrors? Do they not know that Jesus came on earth to restore the ruins of the fall; to drive away famine and disease and sorrow as well as *sin*, which is the parent of them all; to turn our water into wine, and to set up in the human breast, the dominion of all that is peaceful and blessed forever?

True, there is self-denial to be practised, but it is only the denial of the evil self, where the indulgence would bring pain, or lead into temptation, and work alienation from God; and where the denial would install a living, permanent pleasure in the soul. And so it does occur, that where the Prince of Peace enthrones himself in the human bosom, there evil passions come to be more and more hushed, the tumults and strifes of the breast are quieted, and all the faculties are reduced to harmony; and the soul, at peace with itself and at peace with God, becomes a living instrument all in tune, discoursing heavenly music.

Nor is it by any means a mere future joy which the Gospel preaches and which we offer unto men. So they imagine it to be who think it is enough

if they can snatch a passport to heaven at the dying moment. But the joy is meant to be a present reality—now—every moment welling up within, and only at length, merging into eternal relations and projecting itself on an infinite scale.

Has any one thought that the joy of heaven is a mere local joy, belonging to a happy place, and that you could just enter in there and find it—the melody of sweet sounds, the charm of rapturous sights, the bliss of some supernatural ecstasy into which the soul is taken up to the third heaven as in a trance? And do you mean, then, that if by some peradventure, Judas, from his fiendish, despairing death could just have gotten entrance at that golden gateway he would have been made "perfectly blessed in the full enjoyment of God to all eternity?" No. No!

Have we not seen that you may take a man from the street and seat him down amidst the festivities of the most joyous circle of earth, where fond friends are full of loving and blissful communion, and every element of earthly pleasure gushes up there to the brim—wealth, beauty, banqueting, music, loving tones of friendship—so that the very air of the halls is laden with the rapture, and is that *stranger* happy because he has been ushered in there? No. No! But miserable, just because he is a stranger, just in proportion to the contrast which he feels in himself to all that friendly communion of kindred hearts. He is as much already thrust out into the outer darkness as though he were banished from the brilliant company. Nay,

it would seem even a relief to him from the insufferable brightness and from the gross contradiction, if he could but be turned out into the dark street again. That was Christ's parable of the man without the wedding garment—of the guests out of place, miserable. Hence, it is not heaven as a *place* so much as heaven as a *state* that is represented to us in the Scriptures. And therefore, it *may* be, God has not chosen to tell us what glorious planet he has fitted up with the many mansions, only that it is *where Christ* is, and where all the good and blest in all the universe shall be with him forever.

You must carry heaven within you, in the germ and living principle at least, or it will not develop itself under any heavenly sky or any celestial influence whatever. While it is all of grace yet it is only as a man *soweth* heaven that he shall also *reap* heaven. It is not the joy of a place for which the Psalmist prays in the text. It is the joy of God's salvation.

We need only advert to some of the commonest elements of this Christian joy as a joy in God's salvation, and it will be seen that it reaches far above all ordinary sources of pleasure.

The *joy of a soul at peace within*, its own discordant principles brought into harmony with all that is truly blessed in the universe, having its affinity with God, seeking its pleasure in his perfections and having its will attuned to his—*this*, at once, takes highest ground as a great step heavenward, and gets the joy already as a life,

an inward principle, a quality of the soul. It is no longer then a *happening*, as worldly happiness, so called, most commonly is; it is a *being*—a blessedness in actual, living possession. This is the first joy of God's salvation.

And then there is *the joy of pardoned sin.* You have only to contrast this with the tortures of an accusing conscience and you may know what is the blessedness of "the man whose iniquities are forgiven and whose sin is covered"; who has heard the blissful sentence as from the very lips of Christ —"Thy sins are forgiven thee. Go in peace."

This is not the altogether doubting and doubtful exercise which commonly passes current as the Christian hope, with nothing fixed, nothing confident, and hence, no rest to the soul, no love, because no assurance of Christ's love—no joy nor peace, because no security; but it is the sense of pardon as a *fact* founded on the great facts revealed in the Gospel and surely ascertained to us in the record which God hath given of his Son— "And this is the record that God hath given to us, *eternal life*, and this life is in his Son . . . . . that ye may know that ye have eternal life." Unto them that believe Christ is precious, and they to whom Christ is precious, they are true believers. The apostle says: "We joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ by whom we have now received the atonement." It is no self-joy, no flattering self-gratulation in frames and exercises that are counted acceptable to God. The object is outside of self.

This is a high felicity to such that sends one singing to his daily business and even to the common hardships of life, that emboldens one to lift his face toward the heaven and to rejoice in God, that quenches a thousand nameless heartburnings, distresses, doubts, and banishes a world of fears.

This is no mere *future* thing, beginning only in the remote hereafter, postponed till eternity as the fruit of a life without joy or peace. No! It sets the heart, at once, leaping and bounding in the consciousness of pardon. It is not *rest* alone—nor peace alone. It is all these and more. It is a well-spring of active, exulting joy!

And so, *thirdly*, there is the positive abounding joy of the Christian life.

Think for a moment what is the legitimate blessedness of such a new and heavenly nature in the active service of God—calling God *Father*, moving in sympathy with the highest good, and entering already into the joy of Christ himself, each becoming in his sphere a Saviour. This is it—"Not as the world giveth, give I unto you. My peace I leave with you"—the peace of the Prince of Peace—"that my joy might remain in you"—*the joy* of the exulting, victorious Redeemer, triumphing over the world, the flesh and the devil and entering into his rest.

And then the joy of Christian trust. The perfect peace of a mind that is stayed on God, the peace flowing like a river, with an interest in a covenant "ordered in all things and sure," certified of all things working together for good, guaran-

teed against all real evil even where there may be the threatening of it and the seeming of it, assured beforehand of never having any real good thing withheld; though poverty may come and bereavement, yea, death itself, yet by all the divine attributes, as God is able to control all elements and resources, warranted against the lack of any real benefit or blessing whatever—this is another element of the Christian joy. Though the trouble be great, though it be the sum of all trouble in one, yet staying the soul on God, equally as in small troubles—in six not only, but in seven—confident that Christ can bear our great burdens as well as our small ones, just as the ocean bears on its bosom the stateliest ship as easily as the light sea-weed, just as the sun bathes with its golden glory the huge mountains as easily as the *mole-hill.*

And then, this living in the atmosphere of Christian love, this must needs be a joyous living—a most enriching method indeed, by which others' joy is entered into and rejoiced in and made our own, and so the vast amount accumulates, by this power of reduplication, until there is absolutely no limit to which the mighty aggregate can be confined, but the soul has seemed to *enter into* the joy of every other happy ransomed soul, and has risen even to share the joy of the great *Ransomer* himself.

What wonder that such an one attains, under God, to the sublime power of rejoicing in tribulations also! That seems only a rude act of violence where the bow is drawn over the cords of the

stringed instrument. But then you see the artist with the other hand quietly touching the several *chords* as if knowing just where the music lies. And this brings forth from the mysterious depths the most exquisite melodies, even under the roughest sweeping of the strings.

And then, not only to be living in the constant sense of pardon and deliverance, but beaming in the smiles of God, and sharing in the felicity of angels' work, and looking forward all the while to this pleasure in *perfection*—the holiness without a spot, the blessedness without a limit or interruption forever—this is the Christian's joy. All this and more is comprised in the joy of God's salvation. All joy of earth does merely hint of this and somehow image it forth. It is the joy of infancy reposing on the parental bosom, the joy of youthful ardor and vigor in a glad service, the joy of the student solving his problems and drinking in knowledge to the depths, the joy of the merchant buying wine and milk without money—seeking and finding goodly pearls, the joy of the soldier covered all over with the laurels of daily victories, the joy of the shipwrecked mariner picked up from the boiling deep and riding beautifully into port, the joy of the *prodigal* son welcomed home.

And now, I say, all this exulting, abounding joy belongs of right to every believer, as a rightful partaker of God's salvation. It is a blissful experience that he is warranted and invited to enter into.

But while I say this, I know full well that many have it only in a very inferior degree. They have

never as yet read properly the Gospel warrant, and, therefore, they have not entered into the full satisfaction. As if one had his warrant to draw a million pounds and had read it as being only for others and not for himself, or for himself only on some impossible condition, or only in some other frame and experience; or as if he had read it as being for a hundred pence instead of for a million pounds and, therefore, had gone starving in the very lap of privilege—rich, but not knowing the *full facts* of his heritage and, therefore, not abounding in the joy.

So, I know, there are others, and many of them, who have once been possessors of this joy, but have *lost* it.

Look at this language of the text! Here is the man after God's own heart, contemplating for himself a work of aggressive piety in the world, but his soul is paralyzed and his path is darkened by sin. How can he preach peace to others when his own breast is not at peace! How can he celebrate the glad salvation when his iniquity, like a spectre, rises up before him, and confronts him at every step! How many a sublime and joyous psalm has he sung in glowing numbers, rehearsing God's praises in the ear of the worldling and wayward! But his mouth is silenced now to all this! *He has sinned!* And now, he can only wail out his bitter relentings into the ear of the God whom he has wronged. The world scoffs at him and will take no warning at his lips. What can he do? He would fain teach transgressors God's ways, but he

himself is now a transgressor. What must *he have* for this aggressive piety on earth? What element of Christian life is it that he most intensely craves and for which he cries out in the agony of his soul? It is joy—Christian joy—*the joy of God's salvation!* How can the blackened prism reflect the sun-ray? But only let it be *clear*, so that God's own light can enter into it and penetrate its whole substance, and then, from every side and angle of its surface, it will give out from its crystal depths not only the light, but that light divided and distributed in all the beauteous colors of the rainbow.

I know not what was the style of your first love, or your early joy in God—but *where is it*, even such as you then had? What has quenched it that you now have lost the bounding step and eager purpose and go no longer singing to your daily duties in the blessedness of God's salvation? It may be some secret sin that is slowly eating out the life of your piety. It may be that this is why you have no open, cheerful, outspoken utterance for Christ—that you have cherished some vile passion, or have omitted daily Christian devotions, or have absented yourself from the places of spiritual refreshing, and thus you may have wilfully lost all sweet and holy communion with God. I only know that, for the most part, such a joyous, exultant piety is sadly lacking from among us. Your faces are lighted up with other and fickle pleasures, rather than irradiated all the year long with this glory of the divine life in the soul.

Come up now and understand your privilege. You own *every thing* in Christ if you own any thing in him. If you are a Christian, then all things are yours—the world is yours, life is yours, death is yours, things present are yours, things to come are yours. And if you are not a Christian, nothing is yours, *nothing.* Only wake up to consider what you might have, ought to have, must have, to enter fully into the great salvation, and then come up to the mercy-seat asking to *get back* what you have shamefully lost—that heavenly transport that once was yours, that luxury in doing good, that peace flowing like a river, that joy in God, that glorying in tribulations even, and that bright and blessed earnest of heaven. Ask to get it back. You need it—you can have it! It is only the son asking for his father's bread and bounty, as he comes in, sick of the husks.

If it be indeed some master sin that has enslaved you, that has made the precious promises distasteful and heaven itself to you no longer as a prize to be gained, or a crown to be won; if you are just sitting, as the son of such a Parent, satisfied among the swine, there is yet left to you this one grand resource—the Father's house and heart. You are a son, even though a prodigal son, and you have just to be up and return, with your soul full of confessions, and you shall yet be received to that Father's bosom as a son and be welcomed to the son's share in the Father's bread and bounty.

And, already you are anticipating the change which such abounding Christian joy would work

in your daily living. The joy of the Lord is *your strength.* How it would needs show itself as a *vital force*, prompting you to a bold and joyous profession of Christ in all your living, and lifting your banner to the breeze—not ashamed of Jesus, not backward but forward in duty, not listless but *jubilant* in the proper aggression of the church upon the world, like a triumphant banner—doing just what you have so egregiously omitted in the proper publishing of his Gospel to fellow-sinners.

For such a brimming joy would be in itself *a Gospel sermon.* That sunshine of the soul would reflect from a thousand points the sun. It would sit on the face like a beam of glory from the skies. It would lift up its banner inscribed with the name of a covenant God. So it would march to every new conflict, rejoicing in the Captain of Salvation. It would sing out, in the bounding step, full many a gentle, gracious Gospel message, and would go to others as melting music where you might not speak a word.

The silent, unconscious influence of such a heaven-lit life is powerful. It is often more than argument. It is the mute testimony, like that which the stars give to the power and love of their Creator,

> "Forever singing as they shine,
> The hand that made us is divine."

I have seen it—where a Christian man has walked the street with his head erect and his countenance aglow with a cheerful piety, seeming to go shining and singing, like the sun in his daily

course, and I have taken that to be a living demonstration which no sophistry can break down or dare dispute. I know not how else the face of dying Stephen was sunny and beaming, "as it had been the face of an angel," unless it were by this radiance and glow of the martyr *joy* that already sat upon his brow.

And then, you need to crave also *the upholding* of God's *free Spirit*, that sweetly stirring agency in the human bosom which, at the same time that it makes the soul buoyant with a conscious freedom and gives it alacrity for every good work, freely upbears it from all stumbling. God's FREE Spirit which is in utter contradiction to the spirit of bondage and fear—a spirit of filial confidence and filial love that can not be hampered by doubts and restraints, but plants itself in the facts of Christ's finished work, and walks at liberty—free as air, this you must crave as the living source and sustainer of your joy, that you may not fall any more into the bondage of some evil passion, or of some foul accusation of Satan, but may stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made you free, and daily go forth to duty as the freedman of Jesus Christ—for, "where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty," and the fruit of the Spirit—that which it brings forth in the Christian heart and life, as naturally as the vine brings forth its clusters—the *fruit* of the Spirit is love, joy, *peace.*

And, *secondly:* Such an abounding joy will naturally express itself in word and action—"Out of the abundance of the heart, the mouth speaketh;"

and one who is revelling in the divine pleasures will needs make it known.

This inward pressure, this divine and loving constraint, will set one publishing the Gospel to those who also might be gladdened by the good news. This Gospel makes the tongue of the dumb sing. And the singing becomes an eloquent proclaiming of the message, in the very style of the angels; not prosy, not gloomy, but joyous; not harsh, but melodious.

This was probably the strain in which the multitude broke out in that remarkable gift of tongues at Pentecost—all reciting in high and jubilant measures the wonderful works of God. And, while their full souls exulted in the praises of his life and death and resurrection and ascension, *that* Gospel song carried with it a double power with the hearers. It was their testimony, and it was their *joyous* testimony. It was tidings—it was glad tidings, and it was glad tidings of great joy, rehearsed by glad tongues.

And it would seem that these joyous demonstrations are what the church may look for again, and at once, as the signs of the Spirit's work and the means of his further working. And men shall come together again, at such outbursts of God's people, and say: "How hear we every man in our own tongue in which we were born, declaring the wonderful works of God."

Ah! It is the dull, sluggish, heavy tone of formal prayer and praise that makes the testimony powerless. We do not abound as we ought in

praises—private, domestic, social, public praises of God. The "hosannas languish on our tongues and our devotion dies." And then, what wonder that the highest doctrine palls on the ear of the multitude, and the weightiest truth carries no conviction at our lips? Are we aiming to be only "*proper*" Christians, when souls of men are at stake? Is it only the genteel air and manner of devotion that we seek, afraid to venture a word with a perishing fellow-sinner aside from the rule of propriety we have laid down for ourselves? As though the command of God to us were just to make as little stir as possible with our religion, and to tell no man of him! As though the oath by which we had bound ourselves in the church aisle were an oath to keep the profoundest secrecy, lest this rich mine of God's treasure might be dug by too many.

Give us the *abounding joy*, as a new baptism of the church, this holy anointing with the oil of the guest chamber and the banquet of Christ, and then the publisher will go forth—they can not help it—just as the whole array of the starry heavens, as they go out on their bright and gladsome courses, go singing as they shine; just as all the daughters of music that throng the forest, while they sing out their own joys, are publishing God's goodness and glory in the spring-time.

And so, finally: this abounding Christian joy will give a freeness and freshness and heartiness in the divine service. Trammels, hindrances, restraints will be broken through. The soul that

has been long sluggish and could not move in any work of evangelizing others, will take to the wing and rise above all common barriers.

It is time to have done with the cold constraint of mere law and duty in the divine service. There must be a higher, nobler impulse if we would please God or prevail with men. We need to feel the stimulus of Christ's love to us, with all its overpowering force. We live too near the day of glorious revelation, we border too closely upon the coming of the Son of Man, and the *coming* in of the full and eternal salvation, to be utterly holding our peace. We need now to be catching the animation of the other side, to be hearing the music of the celestial city, as we near the shores, "for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed."

And many of us have lived long enough at ease, and idle in the church, if we are ever to do any good and great thing for God and for souls. I know no other remedy for all the shameful dulness and apathy of the time than just to get back, at least, the joy of God's salvation that we once had, and then to get it increased till it shall be full to the brim and overrunning—the *joy* that belongs of right to the *salvation* in every case—and then you, yourselves, can well imagine with what alacrity, cheerfulness and zest you would go singing out your testimony to the power of God's grace. And the glad hosannas would no more languish on your tongue, and then your labor with others would be a shining success. Sinners would

throng to join the bannered ranks, they would be *professing* Christ, as they *are not* now, while no song is on your lips, no sunlight on your countenance, no singing in your step, no banners lifted up in triumph, and no music in your heart and life. They would come flocking around your standard, longing to enter into your joy and into your service of song, and to be sharers with you of the *great salvation.* Your life would accost them as a *hymn of praise to Christ*, ten thousand times more melodious and winning than all the most ravishing arts of formal worship. It is in such a glad array that the church would go forth, "clear as the sun, fair as the moon, and terrible as an army with banners." And this would be the glad working. You would be telling your joys and others would be asking after the like joys for themselves. They that hear you singing, in all the round of your living devotions—"Nearer my God to thee," will echo the strain, "nearer to thee."

And now, my brethren, consider in this light, the *duty* of *Christian joy.*

You think of it as a rare privilege which you are denied, which belongs perhaps only to the far-off heights of Christian advancement, where they get upon the last round of the ladder and step on the threshold of heaven. But heaven is not a definite distance off, like the sun or moon. You can bring it as near as you will. But you do not apply yourselves to the duty of heavenly joy. And so you go, getting only at best the occasional thrill of a pleasure which is your lawful heritage. And so

you are cramped in your activities and cold in your devotions. Would you not already begin the celestial anthem, "Worthy is the Lamb, that was slain?"

In the economy of grace, God's children are *commanded* to go along, singing to their daily work. Even the martyrs go to the stake hymning the praises of their Redeemer. And it is Satan who tells you that if you are a Christian you have no right to smile and be buoyant. And just by such a foul falsehood he cuts the nerves of your exertion. Christian joy seeks expression in Christian work, and the work again brings revenues of joy, and this constitutes the bright circles in which the Christian goes through his round of duty. And so, along all the ranks of Christ's army, goes the command—"Rejoice in the Lord always; and again I say, rejoice."

Why should not the church, even while it is militant, lift up her standard in the name of her covenant God, and peal out her stirring music as a glad testimony of the glad tidings, instead of marching, like a captive host, with arms reversed and drums muffled and banners trailing in the dust? Shall I say, God asks for a revenue of glory from the rejoicings of his children? And Jesus pronounced his blessing upon the infant voices when they made the old temple ring with his praises. To him one such burst of hosannas was more than all the majestic orchestra of the temple. That, he said, is praise perfected out of the mouth of babes —that is strength ordained from lips of sucklings,

that has power to still the enemy and the avenger more than an armed host.

The more we drink the cup of Christian joy, the more do we obey the divine injunction. And this at once sends us on our way publishing the great salvation just by giving expression to the joy of that salvation. So that the work of the Christian life is essentially cheerful and, so far from being a drudgery, it is not only a luxury, but a high necessity.

# XVII.

## EVERY MAN HIS OWN BUILDER.

"If any man's work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward. If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire." —I Cor. iii. 14–15.

Every man is a builder, whether he will or not. Some fabric he is erecting busily, day by day, at all seasons and by all means. He is laying his hand to a work of some sort, and silently and steadily it goes up to its completion—the result of all his thought and all his activity, the expression of all his character.

Noah was the builder of an ark, according to the divine direction, which was to be his ark of refuge and his home of safety to outride the deluge of God's wrath. By that work, it is said, he condemned the world of foolish builders and false builders who rear no ark for eternity.

The Psalmist celebrates the coming Messiah as the stone which the builders refused and which was to become the head of the corner—the chief corner-stone in the true temple of God. And then, further, Jesus is declared by the prophets to be a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner-stone, a sure

foundation for every man to build upon for eternity. And then, when Jesus himself came, he spake a parable to show the consummate wisdom of building one's house upon a rock, because that house is to comprise a man's dearest interests, it is to be the sacred enclosure of his home. The hearth-stone of his domestic life is to be there, the circle of his children. And by all that *there* is centred, of most surpassing value to him, must be the arrant folly of building his house upon the sand.

A day of trial is coming, my brethren. It can not always be sunshine and peace. There must be also stormy tests and fiery tribulations. Tempests will blow that will rock the building to its base. Fires will burn that shall consume all that is combustible about it.

The apostle is speaking, in the text, of the different structures which men may erect upon the one only true foundation.

He is speaking, primarily, of *ministerial builders*, whose function it is to set before men the one only foundation for them to build upon, or, as under workmen to carry up different parts of the great spiritual temple in the world. They may build into the wall, he says, various materials of doctrine or of membership—either the precious gold and silver and the splendid stones of porphyry and jasper such as form the foundations of the New Jerusalem, or they may build into it the merest rubbish of error and of false profession, which the fire will utterly consume.

But the principle applies no less *to church members* than to ministers, no less to private builders and buildings than to public ones. Individual Christians may be building various structures even upon the same Jesus Christ as a foundation. This is also the teaching of the text.

*First*, then, we learn that it is not enough for a man to *have his hope in Jesus Christ.*

One must build upon him to get the advantage of the foundation which he is, to be resting upon no other. This is rather a negative thing. To be resting one's hope upon Christ so far as one has any hope, this is not enough. Is there, in such case, any hope at all, properly so called—understood as compounded of *desire* and of *expectation* also? Many an one in the church has no hope, because that which he calls a hope has no element in it of *expectancy.* It sets its telescope to no glorious world of light; it deals with no daily evidence and has no habitual substantiation of the things hoped for, as a true faith is wont to substantiate them. You might say that such an one has Christ for his foundation, but for the foundation of *what?* No building is seen going up and daily developing its Christian proportions under the workman's hand.

What then? This foundation, which is Jesus Christ, is not alone the doctrine of Christ as the Messiah, nor is it alone even the doctrine of his finished work; much less is it a mere church connection. It is all this and more. It is the *personal, living* Jesus Christ himself, just as he claims

to be the personal, living *Way*, and the personal, living *Truth*, and the very personal *Life itself*. And so it is not possible to have this foundation lying idle and unoccupied, as you may see some deserted foundation that lies awaiting for a long time its superstructure, and so is wasting away under the power of the elements and going to dilapidation. *No!* Jesus can not be such a foundation, just because he is a personal, living foundation—as a vine can not be for long years without a branch, because it is a living vine. It is a foundation that "groweth unto a holy temple in the Lord."

Observe, *secondly: Jesus Christ* is to serve a man as a foundation to his building.

The first question is, as to whether he will build on the rock Christ Jesus, or on some shifting sand; whether he will carry up his life-long work on the solid basis of Christ's finished work, or whether he will choose some sea-beach for his location, where the dashing surf shall rise and sweep away both the house and the foundation itself. He can not escape being a builder, and here is the gracious provision—to have this massive, immovable foundation-work all ready to one's hand, all its outline determining the ground plan of the structure—tower and buttress and doorway—all marked out, so as that he has only to follow the base-line in carrying up the walls, and then to have the precious corner-stone binding together the walls themselves that rest upon it.

And, if he have even chosen Christ to build

upon, then it is still for him to take heed *how* he builds upon him. For, still, the superstructure may be very inappropriate to the foundation. The man may dream that all is well if he put up any worthless fabric upon so goodly a base, or if he put up none at all. But the fabric ought to be such an one as is worthy of the base, else it will stand condemned by it. The foundation is given him not to dispense with his own labor, but just to invite his labor upon such a noble ground-work; not to be all the work, but the fundamental part of the work. And so the edifice is to rise under the builder's hand as a Christian fabric, in all its beautiful and comely proportions; always outlined and stayed and supported by this living, substantial foundation, which is *Christ Jesus.*

Who can estimate the grace that presents to every man such an advantage of grounding himself upon Jesus, upon his perfect merit, upon his finished work, so that he may have his house go up upon the Rock of Ages—sure of standing firm amidst the flood and unshaken by the wreck of the globe. Think of having it freely granted to a poor sinner to build upon him whose goings forth have been from of old—from everlasting. And then to build after his pattern and model so as to have the building shaped and outlined by his own human example.

And then, further, to feel that he has a plan for each of us. So that he stands the supervisor and architect of our own personal structure, and his great thoughts of love are daily working in prov-

idence to guide and shape the fabric that is going up under our hands as our life-work for eternity.

And, then, to have his finished work that was laid deeply in the counsels of Godhead serve us not only as the substratum, but also as the crown of glory of our work. All that work of toil and suffering and tears and blood to build upon and glory in, from base to topstone of our edifice; all that precious, gracious work which he became incarnate to accomplish, and whose history is written in this Gospel of grace; to have it all made yours and mine—to be applied most freely—all his building made our building, as if it were our own handiwork, when its perfection and stability and everlasting worth are such as that all the angels could never have achieved it.

And, then, to know, of a surety that building upon Christ you are certain of your foundation standing firm, even though your poor tenement which you built should be swept away by the flood or wrapt in the final conflagration. Oh! This is infinite grace, that should induce a man —every man—to build upon this Rock of Ages, whatever else he does, or fails to do; and how poorly soever he may have built upon it.

And now, observe, *thirdly:* It is possible even for a Christian man to build upon this goodly foundation the merest rubbish. We speak now as to the material.

Take the whole class of careless, inanimate, secular, worldly Christians, where your charity stretches itself to the utmost limit in order to take

them in—the whole crowd of border Christians, negative, lukewarm, half-way, inefficient. They are doing certain Christian deeds of worship and of Sabbath service, and, so far, they may seem to come within the outermost circumference of the living membership. Their activity *professes* to be Christianized, but it is not. They repeat their vows of consecration. They make, so far, a credible profession—that is, not absolutely *incredible*.

But what is the sum total of their Christian work? Even the Sabbath, with its poor half service, may be already a drudgery. What would the great Inspector, the chief Architect, say of their *building*—of its design, its proportions, its symmetry, its advancement? What of the materials and the workmanship—what of it taken as a progressive whole? It is *wood*, *hay*, *stubble*, a house of boughs and reeds for walls and roof, a mere summer-house, a toy-house for the children, as if never dreaming of making it a substantial structure for residence—much less *fire-proof*.

What now, my brethren, are the materials which are daily building into your walls and forming part of your life structure?

See the unsubstantial refuse which goes into so many of these buildings—the unsettled doctrine, the irresolute purpose, the inconsistent behavior, the rush of worldliness, the inactivity and inefficiency in religious duty, the dead wood of dead works, the straw of empty profession, the stubble of misconceits and of ill-tempers and delinquencies. No plan, no selection of material, no archi-

tectural execution, and hence, no building that is substantial enough to hold together in a storm, much less to resist the fire. How poorly does all this befit the glorious and costly foundation! How few have wrought any thing that abides, any thing that you can find when they are gone! How few have left any monument behind them! Show us where, among the circles of professed builders, is some ark going up like Noah's, or some altar of sacrifice like Abraham's? How many live with their names on the roll of the church, but of whose work in the church there is nothing at all to mention, not so much as a scarlet thread hung out from the window like Rahab's in the service of God's messenger!

If there be no plan, nor principle, in the religious living; no earnest estimates of daily duty, no systematic and proportionate *giving* and praying, no care nor painstaking to make the most of one's time and the most of one's talent and the most of one's opportunities in God's service and in the work of the church; if all the man's wit and forethought and art and busy industry be applied to his secular business; if he have not yet learned the secret of carrying his religion into all his pursuits—being diligent in business yet, withal, fervent in spirit, and in all things and by all means *serving the Lord*—then I see how that man's building must be a careless huddling together of life's trash and refuse in his religious undertakings, a vast pile of rubbish, a building of odds and ends —every thing at random, wood, hay, stubble, *hap-*

*hazard*—and all of it the light, combustible stuff which *blazes at the touch of fire!*

We learn, accordingly, in the *fourth* place, how even a Christian man may be but *barely saved.*

At the day of final revelation which shall make every man's work manifest, such a foolish builder as we have named shall *suffer loss*—an awful loss—by being stripped of all his work in the fiery trial. I would have you reflect, my brethren, that it is possible for a Christian to be barely saved—saved so as by fire.

Will any one say that this is all he asks, to be saved at last, however narrowly escaping eternal destruction? But who can tell the loss! It may be the difference between parlor and attic or cellar. Let none imagine that all they need for their house is a foundation, however good, however splendid. Let no man think that even the finished work of Jesus Christ is enough for him, without any work of his own going up upon it. The *foundation calls* for the *corresponding superstructure*—demands it, rebukes the lack of it. And the day is coming when a severe ordeal "shall try every man's work *of what sort it is.*"

I see many a man satisfied with being in the church, professing to have Christ for a foundation, but no building going on there; making little account of daily religion—planning nothing for Christ, not striving to live after Christ, not building upon Christ; deluded with the idea that his future is safe, because he has a theoretical faith and hope in Christ, or an outward church connec-

tion with nothing practical and personal; not asking how a *mere foundation* will answer when he needs a *house* for shelter and refuge, or how it will go *with him* if, in the fiery day, his house be found to be of light, combustible stuff which the flame shall instantly devour; especially not considering that he may have been all the while building that house on the sand.

That day shall call for solid work, for massive masonry, for results of hard day-labor and sweating toil of the builder—and all this on the one only foundation, Jesus Christ. It will be a day of searching analysis, of universal, awful manifestation. Then shall be plainly disclosed just how much every man has done, and just how little; and what sort of work it is, and how far it has justified the reasonable expectations, from such a foundation as is laid in the Gospel and professedly chosen by every Christian man.

I see some—*many*—who will be able to show nothing in the shape of a building which will stand a moment's test of that last fearful day.

How inexorable the fire is in its devouring appetite for all that light and empty material! How in one instant that ark of rushes has vanished and nothing is left where all that pride had been! Yes. Even the Christian man may be barely saved—as a brand plucked out of the burning, after the fire had fastened upon it already, so as to begin to blacken and char it—*barely saved! Almost lost!* Like Lot, saved only at the hardest, only out of the jaws of perdition, only by the special urgency

of good angels at the last moment; only at the very side of some pillar of God's wrath, where his own wife, almost saved, is lost after all.

This being saved yet suffering loss—the man himself saved but saving nothing with him—is as where one has barely escaped from a burning tenement with his life. His very skin is shrivelled by the flames. Estimate the *loss*, if you can, where the Christian is barely kept out of the perdition that overtakes all that he has built; where it would seem he must stand for his eternity on the hot edge of the fiery gulf; just as where one stands amidst the gases and steam of Vesuvius, on the very brink of the crater, having only to think, with trembling awe, how he has just so narrowly escaped being swallowed up in its yawning abyss of fire!

Is this a result worthy a Christian's ambition, to stand at last, like a man whose dwelling is burned over his head and who is driven out, naked and homeless, into the streets, only not himself consumed, yet stripped of every thing but his life? This is the case of a Christian man who has no substantial Christian building to show at last; nothing, save the Christian foundation upon which he built his house of straw. There were only fitful and random efforts of piety—scattered deeds of Christian charity—nothing systematic, habitual, day by day, as the day-laborer, and hence no completed and consistent edifice at last, as the result that is worthy of the name. He has no work that can stand the test, nothing that can abide as a

building, and the awful loss he suffers is that of every thing but existence itself. It is one thing to be snatched from the endless burning as a charred brand; but oh! it is quite another thing to have an entrance ministered abundantly into God's everlasting kingdom.

Look now at this opposite case in the text—at the Christian man whose *work abides*, who is *abundantly* saved—saved with his house and his household, saved with all the goodly and beautiful and stately and substantial fabric he had built on Jesus Christ.

Observe, there is the *daily work* on this building. No day that something is not done to advance the structure. Every thing that is wrought at home and abroad, on Sabbaths and week-days alike, is made to contribute to the glorious fabric.

And so the work goes on everywhere, just as the carpenter is making the doors and windows of the house far off in his own factory, or as where the iron front of a store is casting away in the distant foundry. The religion of that man is carried into daily life and, just as the fire converts the clay into the hardest brick for the building, so his religion has this converting power, and his afflictions even work this result, giving solid substance to what were else only as the dust of the streets or the common soil you tread upon.

And so it comes to pass that some men's building material is most costly and rare—is even gold, silver, precious stones. Only conceive how exquisite a structure it is possible for a Christian to

erect upon Jesus Christ, by little and little working into walls and cornices and capitals the most rich and splendid materials, and, here and there, the gold and silver ornaments that shall glisten in the light of that final revelation—bringing the world's art and treasure and making the whole domain of wealth and beauty contribute to the work. Just as you may see porphyry columns from the great temple of Diana wrought into the Christian temple of Chrysostom—like the temple at Jerusalem itself—its spanning roof overlaid with gold, and its pinnacles and turrets pointed with gold, cedar of Lebanon for its beams which the worms will not perforate, and all the cunning handiwork of Tyrian builders applied to make it the most splendid of all earthly structures: or like the famed chapel of the Medici at Florence, *lined* with slabs of all precious stones—the porphyry and malachite and agate and lapis lazuli—all polished to the highest degree, and even the tombs dazzling with the rarest glory, and that as a family mausoleum amidst the splendor of which they lay their household dead.

Take the life of some of the men whose Christian usefulness has left such a splendid memorial of Christian works behind them—as that of Edwards, Whitfield, Wesley, Nettleton—whose acts of faith like bars of molten gold, and whose patience of hope and labors of love like the precious stones of the celestial foundations, have all been wrought into an exquisite fabric upon the basis of Jesus Christ. We bless God that, in our day, men are building monuments, in the shape of Christian

hospitals and educational and charitable institutions, to stand for ages, doing their silent and beneficent work in which God and angels rejoice.

Look at Leigh Richmond, writing the tract of the "Dairyman's Daughter," and by this one act, which was only the expression of his Christian life, building into his life structure so many polished stones, rearing so many pillars in the temple of God! See how the building grows upon his hands to this day, and seems, at length, to be like some fairy mansion, widening and towering more and more with each succeeding year of new successes to his work! Long after the builder's head is in the dust and his soul in glory the stately pile goes up, and the procession of converts from that simple story of the cross lengthens, and they keep pouring in to heaven, where he rests from his labors and his works do follow him. You know the foundation of that structure from the fabric itself—like the Milan Cathedral, bristling all over at the pinnacles and turrets with human forms, wrought carefully into living proportions, and everywhere embellishing the gorgeous structure, filling every niche and corner, every capital, as so many stately trophies of the workman's art, as if aiming everywhere to elevate man and thrusting up towards the heavens the marble statues of man as types of the true.

Look at John Bunyan, who might have excused himself from any great enterprise of usefulness in the dungeon of Bedford Jail; but, while many an inert, lifeless Christian was sorrowing that so much power for good should be shut up in

a gloomy prison, he had within him a light which the prison walls and bars could not confine—which streamed out through every cranny and crevice. And where God's light and air must come in to him, his light shone out in return, and the atmosphere of his piety breathed around to enlighten and enliven masses of minds to the last day. And since his time, no pilgrim to the celestial city, who has heard of Bunyan's pilgrimage, but walks up Hill Difficulty by the aid of his goodly staff, nor passes the wicket gate without casting off his burden where Bunyan threw his.

Observe, my hearers, the work of a Christian minister is that of a wise master-builder—to lay the foundation upon which the members are to build, to set forth *Jesus Christ* as the rock, and to warn men against the *sand;* to charge men with the wisdom of choosing him for a foundation, and to warn them against the folly of not going forward with the building; to beg them push on their great life-work and take heed *how* they build as well as *where* they build.

And a church ought to be the sphere of utmost business enterprise and activity, unsurpassed by any thing in the world. Here is the field for the noblest exertion of human skill and energy—every man working at the edifice which is to be the result of his labors for life, and all working together, each carrying up some part of the temple of God, some one of those noble structures which are to form the celestial city—the New Jerusalem. That is the city which lieth *four-square*—which is laid

out according to divine rule and not according to the selfish and tortuous interests and arts of men; which calls for conduct that is honest and earnest and straightforward, and not shifting and evasive; where you shall not lose your way among the windings of deceit, but where every thing is open and manifest.

My brethren, the highest glory of a Christian minister is to see the people *busily at work*, each rearing some sightly and substantial edifice of faith and love upon the foundation he has laid among them; to watch the proportion of each structure as it develops day by day, and to look forward to the time when, in that New Jerusalem, he shall walk some golden street all lined with rows of stately palaces built by his people, each for himself on Jesus Christ.

There is one reflection from this subject which bears upon such of you as have not so much as professed or attempted to build upon this foundation. With you it may be the folly of erecting some laborious work of a careful morality upon a foundation of sand, ignoring the foundation-work of Christ; or it may be the recklessness of having only wood, hay and stubble for building and foundation together. God himself has asked in the Scriptures—"If the righteous scarcely be saved where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?" Grant it, even, that all your criticism of church members is just—grant it that often *their building*, as you see it go up, is of mere combustible stuff. This only points the question which comes home

to yourself—"*If they be scarcely saved*"—if every thing of theirs shall be swept away but the bare foundation, if this fiery ordeal shall utterly consume all men's work and leave them stripped and suffering such fearful loss, only barely kept out of perdition and scarcely allotted a remote corner in the heavenly city, then "where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?"

It is a glorious thing to build on Jesus Christ, to have laid even the first stone upon him as the chosen corner-stone and sure foundation. It is something blessed to build even a booth of boughs or rushes upon such a foundation as Jesus. But to reject him, to be deliberately scorning this high privilege, to be testifying, by your example, that he is worthless or useless for you to build upon, that all his work from Bethlehem to Calvary and in glory is needless for you, or that you have a better ground of hope and conduct for eternity—what will you answer to him at the final bar?

I tell you it is better to be a *poor* Christian than to be *no Christian;* to be a *weak* believer than to be *no believer* at all; better to be making feeble attempts and to have ill success in religion than to be building on the sand. But oh! it is best of all to be daily building up a fabric which shall abide—to be working into it the gold, silver and precious stones, to glisten and glow in the coming glory more elegant and stately than any mansion of earth, which the eye shall delight to rest upon in eternity, and which shall survive the wreck of material greatness forever and ever.

# XVIII.

## THE EAGLE'S NEST.

"As an eagle stirreth up her nest, fluttereth over her young, spreadeth abroad her wings, taketh them, beareth them on her wings; So the LORD alone did lead him, and there was no strange god with him."—DEUT. xxxii. 11–12.

God is the source and pattern of every thing excellent in the universe. If there is fondness in the *paternal relation*, if you see on earth any charming specimen of what a father ought to be, all these qualities have come from God; and they are only at best a dim type and distant hint of what God is, in that capacity, when he bids us call him, "Our Father which art in heaven."

If there is any thing endearing in the *husband*, any attribute in such an one, that wins the heart beyond all common parallel, there, again, is a faint picture of what God is, as he can be but poorly represented in such an image of himself—"Thy Maker is thy husband." So, we all know that a *brother* "is born for adversity." The God-man is our elder brother, and he is the Friend that sticketh closer than a brother. And who does not know what ineffable loveliness there is for us all in a *mother;* how the name tells of matchless fondness, tenderness, watchings, long-suffering and faithful care? But this, also, God takes

as his favorite resemblance and reminder on earth —"As one whom his mother comforteth, so will I comfort you."

And so, also, *in the vegetable world* there are the pictures of himself. The *vine* that clambers over the latticed porch of wealth and poverty alike and hangs ladened with its purple clusters is beautiful. But Jesus claims all that is charming in it, as only a type of himself and says: "I am the true vine." As though these all, in every vineyard, on every hill-side and in every garden, were only to be understood as the shadows and images of the true, himself the genuine, original, archetyped vine, and "ye," he adds, "are the branches"! So, if *bread* is good—if this, that is the food of the starving and the daily nourishment of the millionaire has any thing excellent in itself as the grand staple and staff of life, Jesus says, "I am that bread of life." And if, for every man's thirst, there is nature's beverage, that has the highest power to slake it, so that the king and the peasant draw from the same fountain and drink at the same stream, Jesus says, as he sits by the well-side, where we all have come up with our poor pitchers to draw—"I am the *water* of life." And so, also, where along the path of prince or beggar, the rose of Sharon blooms, or the lily of the valley sheds its fragrance, Jesus says—"I am the Rose of Sharon, and the Lily of the Valley." And fragrance drops from his lips, and his fingers drop myrrh on the handles of the locks.

So if the *sun* in his daily career is glorious,

Jesus still declares, that it is a borrowed splendor, set in the sky to give us this best of all enlightenment—the knowledge of himself; and that he has in perfection, all that is imaged forth in that material orb; for he is the Sun of Righteousness, and rises upon our darkened and desolate souls with healing in his beams.

And so, even in *the animal world*, he has his types—hangs out the pictures of himself to the commonest view. His tender care, he says, is like that of *the hen*, gathering her brood under her wings. And this constant, busy training of his people, in the discipline of daily life, is like that of *the eagle*, with her young in the nest. No wonder, then, that a star celebrated his advent, that the sun hid his face, and that earth's granite rocks rent their bosoms at his crucifixion.

The picture which the Holy Ghost has given us in the text represents a great truth. It teaches us *God's discipline of his children for an elevated Christian life.* He will have us comprehend the vital idea; and so he will take us out to where the noblest of birds builds her nest, on some tall crag of the rock, far above the busy haunts of men, and he will show us how, with untiring device and persistency, she makes it the first great business to teach her young to fly. How she disturbs the nest for this, flutters anxiously over her brood to break up their listless repose and set them in motion towards herself, spreadeth her own wings so that they may catch the idea and be led to imitate her actions, and even takes them

up by her own kind force and bears them on her wings, if thus, by any means, they may be drawn or driven to fly.

This opens to us, *first*, the *grand secret of life.* Life is a *schooling*, a *discipline*, a *preparation for another* world. God has his children here on earth. Some of them are in the church, others are not yet gathered in. Some of them are his young children, yet in the nest, never developed to any maturity. But over them all he busily watches, and with them all he constantly deals and strives.

And this is the meaning of our changes. A man gets a blow in the dark from an unseen hand, and he wonders whether it be an enemy, but finds out that it is a friend driving him back from a precipice, or from the edge of a pit, into which he is just taking the fatal step. We fret and worry at our discomforts and dislodgements. Fire, flood, tornado wait upon us, to sweep away our goods. Robbers, in many a guise, strip us of our hard-earned gains. Sickness reduces our strength, emaciates our frames and dries up our pleasures; and we see ourselves only as the ill-starred victims of adversity, and seek as best we can, to run the gauntlet of our troubles. And this is life! Or perhaps prosperity waits upon us and all our enterprises are a series of successes, and we add house to house and field to field, and call ourselves rich and independent, and see not the hand that is dealing with us, and learn not the intent of his dealings; and this is only another phase of life!

But God's hand in our affairs is life's great secret —undivulged to so many, who never know what helps them or what harms them or by what great powers of the eternal world they are constantly influenced and disciplined for their swift-coming hereafter.

Let us look, then, at *God's children in the nest.* There is a Christian life that is the very least remove from death itself—the barest infancy of the Christian being. And God forbid that we should pronounce against whatever can not show the maturity and manhood of piety. God recognizes his infant children and with more than a mother's tenderness waits upon them, and watches over them; bears long with them, for their advancement in the divine life. Some have been poorly nurtured by their earthly tutors, have been carelessly led along, incorrectly taught, never set to work, or else crippled by ill-usage of their Christian guides. And they are babes long after they should have been grown men. They are using milk long after they should have come to the strong meat of God's mature children. When they ought to have been teachers, they have need that one teach *them* what be the first principles of the doctrine of Christ.

If none but the full-grown, well-developed men and women are true members of Christ's family, then, alas! we have but few. How many stagger yet at the very gate-way of life, not at all established in Christian doctrine, not knowing, as yet, but that their repentance must be in part pay when the ransom price is counted; not certain but

their faith is to save them instead of Christ, or by its own virtue and value, rather than as taking hold of Christ! And though we teach them a thousand times and a thousand ways, there they are yet—never venturing out of the nest, never trying their wings, never soaring nor learning to soar. They are like mariners who have weighed anchor, but they never set sail, nor even unloose their moorings, nor even get away from port. They go no whither, they arrive nowhere.

But there is another class of God's children in the nest. I mean those who are *at ease in Zion.* They are just satisfied to keep a comfortable place in the church for slumber and self-security. They are taking religion as a secondary thing, not as the chief business. They are the sluggish, inactive members, who are vigorous and efficient enough in traffic and merchandising, shrewd enough in making money, and we only wonder at them, how, even if they have their daily prayers, even if they daily say the Lord's prayer, as their Christian mother taught them, they could manage to be such utter drones in the church. You never see them rising high in their devotions, never spreading their wings to soar towards God, never abounding in any Christian grace, never like the eagle, piercing the sky with a steady gaze upon the sun; but always grovelling, taking the narrowest views of Christian privilege and duty, circumscribing their religion within their nest, and, to all appearance, not a whit maturer to-day than years ago in this divine life.

I do not say that such are Christians indeed, as they profess to be; I only know that we may stretch our charity so far as to hope for even such, that they may be, as yet, like Peter, following the Master afar off, until they should be drawn out to a new style of Christian living. I see such evidently satisfying themselves with the comforts of this world, and not looking for a better country, that is a heavenly; folding the cloak of a Christian profession around them and wrapping themselves up in worldly prosperity, and saying, "I shall die in my nest."

I point you, my brethren, in this light, to the meaning of your providential history. I beg you to consider God's discipline towards you, and its high intent. The picture in the text portrays to us the unremitting care and assiduity of God in prosecution of one great end—to make you get out from your indolence and immaturity and rise and fly in all the ways of an elevated Christian living.

There is a higher style of Christian living, just as different from the lower Christian life as the manhood is from infancy, as the soaring eagle is from the unfledged bird in the nest. The Scripture, indeed, sometimes speaks of such an advanced piety as requiring, in some cases, a reconverting power for a new turning to God. I do not say a second regeneration. This is just as impossible as was the case proposed by Nicodemus—a second natural birth. There is no falling from grace where there is no grace to fall from, and

what grace begins it will complete. The new-born soul has the divine life; it may be sickly, faint, dwarfish, feeble, childish, so as to adhere to the diet and action of the child, and seem to get no manliness or maturity. This is what we speak of. And in the case of Peter, Christ forewarned him of his weakness that would issue in a fall, and then assured him that though he should come to be disgraced before his brethren, and should weep bitter tears of shame and sorrow, yet by his divine intercession, his faith should not utterly fail. And when this crisis is past, he says, "When thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren."

Would you know what this reconversion is? Look at the case of Peter. No more following afar off, no more childish fear, no childish boasting; but a heart full of love, that would bear the threefold questioning of the Master at the Sea of Galilee, or plunge into the sea to embrace him; would defend his cause at Pentecost—before the scoffing Jews and scorning Sanhedrim, and did go to prison and to death for his sake; whereas before, he had only made the loud profession and shrank away when the trial came.

Let us look a moment at the assiduity and variety and persistency of God's dealings with us in this direction. Job, out of the midst of his severe discipline, his poverty—children and health gone—caught a view of the dignity of such divine dealing, and cried out—"What is man that thou shouldest magnify him and shouldest set thine heart upon him, and that thou shouldest visit him

every morning, and try him every moment?" And the Psalmist, in the same spirit, wonders when he looks out from the glorious marshalling of the stars and says—"What is man that thou art mindful of him, or the Son of Man that thou visitest him?"

Look, then, upon your changes, and see that they are only the hand of God in your affairs, only the evidence of his interest in you, only the positive proof that he cares too much for you to let you alone. Were it any advantage of a school that you should get no lessons, or that the lessons should never be hard or long, or that when the lesson is poorly learned it should never be given you over again, even with a rebuke, to call attention to it and set you about an earnest study of it, and impress it on your memory? Look back a little and see if there be not here an interpretation of your allotments that you should all along have regarded well and understood. Ask if this understanding of it would not have often altered the whole aspect of life to you—lighted up many of its dark places and made the whole course of it seem sacred, and even its suffering sweet? I think we all understand this, in this day of trouble, under this dispensation of calamity and death.

*First*, there is *the stirring up of your nest.* It is hard to be disturbed so—to have the slumbers broken and the quiet of the dear household invaded by disaster, disease and distress—hard to be dislodged by the hand of violence and have the sweet resting-place utterly torn in pieces and

you and yours emptied out upon the world. But this is only God's fidelity. Every such occasion is only a golden occasion for you to put forth some heaven-born energy, to cultivate some cultured grace, to put you in motion, so as to try your wing and learn its use and practice the divine art of soaring towards God. Therefore he disturbs your house or dislodges you from your comfortable nest. The culture of humility or charity or patience or faith—this is what is aimed at. He knows what a desolate hearth-stone is, and therefore he has adopted this device for your highest interest. Just as if a father should find his son sleeping out at night in the barn, among the cattle, and he should tear his pillow of straw from under him, only to bring him in to his better couch and covering. That stirring up of your nest, God has done. If he had not done it, he would have been caring less for you. That sharp bereavement, that came like a thunderbolt upon the head of your house and struck down the partner of your bosom, or the idol and ideal of your family, was only in the line of his gracious dealing. Just as surely as you are his child, we know what is his intent in the affliction.

You can not fully appreciate the picture before us, unless you consider that it is not only the nest of her young, but *her own nest*, that the eagle stirs up. It is so with the Covenant Angel. God's interest in his children, even in the weakest of them, is amazing. This is his household and his family that he deals with. Their enemies are his

enemies, and his glory and joy is in getting them up to himself.

How he bore with the blindness and hardness and backwardness of the twelve, the denials of Peter and the doubts of Thomas, and even, up to his dying moment, saw from the cross of his agony how they shrank ignobly away, down-hearted, fearful and ready to give up all for lost. And how he spent those forty days seeking after them, and appearing to them all the way from his home in glory, just to clear away their doubts and remove their prejudices. And now, when he stirs up your nest, he feels the pang, for it is his own darling interest that clusters there. Think not it is the hand of a rude invader, who would wilfully break up your peace; think not that God sends these afflictions as purely judicial, with no pang of sympathy in your sorrow. He has tried to show us —"What is the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints." And here in the preceding context, as if to prepare us to appreciate the picture, he has said—"The Lord's portion is his people. Jacob is the lot of his inheritance."

But this is not all. There is an infinite variety in the treatment. Just as that noblest parent bird flutters over her young in utmost anxiety, hovering over them, to arrest their attention; so, if you would listen, you could hear the Covenant Angel, by the very rustling of his wings, in your affairs, constantly challenging your notice, winning you to consider him as your Saviour and to commit your ways to his care; bidding you look upward

from all that is grovelling and selfish and sluggish, and to see and recognize with gratitude how busily and anxiously he watches over you for your highest good. Can you not read this teaching in your history?—"In all their affliction he was afflicted, and the angel of his presence saved them. In his love and in his pity he redeemed them and he bare them, and carried them all the days of old." *This* is life's great secret. And if you know what it is to pity your suffering children, that is the picture, if you please: "Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him." He never stirs up your nest, but he stirs his own soul to the depths.

And then another device for the same object is represented by the eagle *spreading abroad her wings* in the view of her young. It is another feature in the inspired illustration, another variety in the loving discipline of God. We know what this is—that when at some moment the attention has been arrested by some dealing, like this fluttering over you of the Covenant Angel, God shows you, by his own pattern in the flesh, what it is to soar; what he would have you do and how you should do it, ever spreading abroad his own wings, in the way of tempting you to the upward flight.

When he gives us to see how beautiful is that exalted piety which shone in the man Christ Jesus —is there no incitement in it to seek a similar style of living? He became very man to live for us as well as to die for us. All that life of his, from the cradle to the grave, was given as a pat-

tern, no less than a propitiation—pattern prayers, pattern labors, pattern graces, pattern life, pattern death—always soaring himself, so as to teach us to soar.

And can you not read this also, in his parental discipline? Have you not sometimes been driven away from all earthly trusts, from every human helper, to Christ Jesus alone, as the only altogether lovely being in the universe? Have you not been pressed to the simple study of his character and life, as having in it an attraction and a perfection nowhere else to be found? And when sickened of the imperfect earthly examples, you have sought a true and perfect pattern of living, have you not been led directly to behold the Man—the Pattern Man? And then, in every circle of life, among enemies or friends, in the temple or the garden, in the home of Martha or the house of Simon, on Tabor or Olivet, you have seen him spreading his wings teaching and tempting us to soar.

And then, as a crowning feature of the illustration, there is that other variety in the treatment of the Covenant Angel, where he *takes us and bears us on his wings.* When all other dealing has seemed unavailing, and you would neither be worried nor wooed to an elevated Christian life—when he has stirred up the nest and torn it from under you, and you have just clung to the nearest bough; when he has fluttered over you and spread his own wings to your view, all to teach and tempt you heavenward—then, beyond all this,

he has even come by the sweet compulsions of his grace and lifted you up upon his own wings and borne you heavenward. You have seen that nothing has sufficed but his own almighty power bearing you on the bosom of love.

If you have ever been lifted up from your grovelling, it has been by the thought of what an infinite stoop he made, to get you on his wing. He must needs get beneath you in order to bear you up. Angels came thronging out from the sky and hovering over the earth in wonder to see whither he had come, and they could not refrain their anthem, but even among the clouds of this rebel world, they sang, "Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace."

And now you behold him taking you, laying hold upon you to save you, bearing your sins upon his soul, bearing you on the bosom of his divine intercession, and carrying you along with him on the wing of his own victorious ascension; rising from the dead and ascending from earth for you, and bearing your names on his sacerdotal breastplate in heaven—the pledges for you till you come. This has made you soar—only this discovery of his standing for you, dying in your stead, vanquishing death and hell for you, and rising to glory as the Captain of your salvation, only this, at last, has ever tempted you from your nest. And when you have felt these sweet constraints of his love—his own soft hand laid gently on you, to give you the benefit of his triumphant power and grace; when you have felt that you could fly only as his

wings bear you aloft; then you have felt the incitements to a heavenly living, and then, if ever, you have risen to the elevated Christian life.

And now, look back a moment at the variety of the divine treatment in your case. See how it has all borne steadily to this end; see how in it all there has been the appliance of every tender device which infinite love could suggest.

And this is the key to the multiplied and diverse dealings: *first*, the discipline has been calculated to induce a higher style of *prayerfulness*. You have surely seen this. Your losses, sicknesses, bereavements, disappointments, estrangements, all have seemed pointing you with steady finger to the mercy-seat. When you were perhaps flagging in prayer, God has given you something to pray for; and if, under the rod, you have gone to pray merely for present relief, so that all the motive to prayer would be gone with the occasion, Christ has opened to you there, amidst your tears, his own heart of love, and shown you the upper side of the matter. And you have come to prayer in the higher department of its exercise; you have studied and practised it in the higher branches—as a holy communion with God, a happy soaring heavenward, a friendly fellowship with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ. And it has come to be the very breath of your being, and you have put away your old worn-out prayers for new ones; you have learned something of the power of prayer in the amicable wrestling with the Angel of the Covenant, until the breaking of the day.

But it was not until your boasted human strength had been crippled, and you were sent halting to the mercy-seat. Then you have begun to think of prayer not merely as a form, not merely as a duty, but as the highest privilege of the creature and the loftiest freedom of a son. Ah! it was therefore, that every grief dealt out to you seemed a new grief—the loss of a child so different from that of a parent, the loss of a wife so different from that of a child, the loss of property so different again from either; the treachery of friends, the ingratitude of children—each the hardest to bear, just because your faithful Father would, in each affliction, try a new device and give you a new lesson—utter a new call to himself and ply you with some new parental discipline to this end. And if you have learned the lesson well, you have found yourself now praying on a new principle, in a new language and temper of prayer, as different from the former as that of the publican from the Pharisee. And you have found the meaning of the promise—"That they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength, shall mount up on wings as *eagles*."

And so, *secondly*, this series of divine dealings has tended to induce a higher style of *Christian reliance—faith* we call it, that seems with some a mere intellectual exercise with scarce an emotion. You may have found it so in its lower departments. But then, perhaps, God has beaten you about from the nest to the bough, and from tree to tree, until you have been driven to soar up-

wards and to seek your very home in the skies and in his bosom. Now it is not merely belief, it is filial confidence—implicit, childlike reliance. It is trust; it is the higher style of faith, that is deeply emotional, deeply personal, that works by love, takes hold of the inmost, utmost heart, and binds it to the kindred heart of this Kinsman Redeemer in the bonds of a fervent affection.

Then, when you have come to find Christ walking among your daily affairs as truly as he walks among the golden candlesticks — the Alpha and Omega in all providence, and you have seen enough of his dealings, to know that you must not repine at what seems grievous till you see the issue of it, nor call any thing adversity till it has worked out its results; when you have heard him say—"I am the ending as well as the beginning of all providence, the last letter of the alphabet in these lessons, as well as the first," and you have learned to look for a bright noon, out of a cloudy morning—then you have come to walk more by faith, and faith has worked more by love, and you have just thrown yourself into the arms of his faithful and eternal covenant.

And so, also, this discipline has taught you the lesson of *Christian activity* in its higher stages. You have seen this to be the aim of his daily and various dealing—to shake you from your nest by some means or other, so as to put you on the wing. Therefore, you have found all other sources and streams of happiness dried up, saving only the happiness that springs from Christian duty. Even

beyond the happiness of receiving, which the world counts its chiefest pleasure, has been the luxury and blessedness of giving. And when you have come to this, then, indeed, there was the highest evidence of your getting the upper track, dwelling in the higher atmosphere. You have seen Christ showing to you the crown of righteousness, exhibiting the thrones and dominions to be possessed by the saints in glory. And you have heard him say—"He that is faithful in that which is least, is faithful also in much; have thou authority over ten cities." And his own dying love, showing the scars on his forehead and in his very heart, has been a powerful constraint with you, till even his suffering has made all suffering in his service sweet.

This exalted Christian life is no fiction, my brethren, nor yet will it do to hold, that he who can not lay his hand upon his heart and say he has fully attained to this, is no Christian. No! alas! This is theory, but practically the test is extravagant. Men do not longer come into this world in full-grown manhood, like Adam. There must be infancy before maturity, there must be much tending and nursing and growing, much creeping and staggering often, many sore bruises and much of life's daily discipline, before we reach this full manhood of Christian life. But a Christian, like a bird, is made to soar, and therefore he is dealt with by his faithful Father to drive him to the wing.

And, blessed be God! there *is* this elevated style of piety. The firefly lightens only as it flies; birds

of gay wing show their plumage, only as they soar; and none of us can get to heaven except by working up thither, climbing up by the steps of the ladder, where tribulation works patience, and patience works experience, and experience works hope, and hope maketh not ashamed, because the love of God—what God's love is to men in Jesus Christ—is shed abroad in our hearts, by the Holy Ghost given to us.

And now look back upon the discipline of your life past! All along you were too prone to look at second causes, and to overlook God's hand. Even at the grave of some brother Lazarus, you heard the voice of God speaking from the clouds and you referred it to natural phenomena and you said "It thundered," when it was the tender voice of the Covenant Angel, speaking to your soul. Look at your history in this light! Interpret it all on the Christian principle. See if you can not unlock all its mysteries with this one key. Was not the chastisement paternal? Can you not read this tender, yearning love of God in all the severest dealings, emptying you from vessel to vessel, like the wine, that you may be refined? Can you not see the Covenant Angel, every way busied to draw or drive you heavenward? Look at your prosperous days as wooing you to God, and your adverse days as worrying you to seek refuge and fellowship with God. See how this same good hand has been in all your affairs for this same good end, and how sicknesses and bereavements, birthdays and burial days, meetings and partings, good news and bad

news, new friendships and ruptured ones, gains and losses, all were but the new lessons given in this great study of a habitual communion with God. And then crowning all those week-day mercies and miseries, by which you were disciplined, there came the sweet Sabbaths and the holy sacraments, as reviews of the lessons.

And now, after all, how much have you really and inwardly and practically learned? How much higher do you rise to-day in your devotions than you did on the first Sabbath of your new birth? Does not the Angel of the Covenant yet stir up your nest, flutter over you and spread his wings abroad, take you and bear you on his wings? And after all this, are you able to lay your hand upon your heart and say—"Lord, thou knowest all things, thou knowest that I love thee?" "For to me to live is Christ"—Christ for the rule of living, Christ for the motive of living, Christ for the ideal of living, Christ for the source and spring of living, Christ for the very definition of living! Then, indeed, you may afford to be in a happy balance between two worlds—to have Christ with you on earth, or to be with Christ in heaven. Walking with God like Enoch, it could not be but that you shall go up to God, virtually without death—without its sting and curse and bitterness! And when, some day, men will inquire why your place is vacant in the business circle, in the household, and in the church, it will be said—"He walked with God, and he was not, for God took him." He went up, not in any chariot

of fire, but on the soft wing of the Covenant Angel. From where he daily climbed to the topmost round of Jacob's ladder, he stepped directly into heaven; from where he trod on the high-road of Christian living, far up towards the celestial city, he found the door wide open into the golden streets of the New Jerusalem.

# XIX.

## OUR HEAVENLY HOME.

"In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you."—JOHN xiv. 2.

It is the blessed *presumption* of our Christianity that there is a heaven for the people of God. If it had not been expressly revealed it could have been plainly inferred from the whole Christian system; not that the eye hath seen it, though it hath seen Sinai on fire and Jesus transfigured in his robes of light; not that the ear hath heard it, though it hath heard the anthem of angels at Bethlehem. But God hath revealed it unto us, not only in the written word, but in the Christian heart also, by the Spirit. All the assaults of Satan, all the efforts of skepticism, all the powers of the vain world, all the plague of the depraved nature can only obscure the prospect or stagger somewhat the hope. But the voice of Jesus is heard amidst all the confusion saying, in the whole tenor of his teaching, —"Be not afraid:"—"It is so:"—and "if it were not so, I would have told you; because I would not have allowed you to entertain so natural an expectation only to be disappointed." Fears come

rushing upon the soul, like the swelling billows of the ocean just where they foam in the breakers and lash against the shore. But amidst the deepest darkness the signal lights are seen hung out from the very skies. And these are responded to by the testimonies within, as well as by the voices from the garden and the cross, that the whole Christian system requires such a consummation.

What a sport of human hopes would be made by a Gospel that says nothing of *heaven*, by a salvation that stops at the *grave*, by a Saviour who does not bring life and immortality to light. They, therefore, who receive Christ at all do understand that it is for a deliverance which looks beyond the grave; that it is for an inheritance which would be despoiled of its excellence and beauty if it did not lie far beyond the reach of this present evil world.

And so Jesus, with inimitable tenderness, comes forward to the distressed disciples and administers this magic consolation. The great cure for heart-trouble, he says, is to believe in him, and then he announces this ultimate fact of a home in heaven for God's people. Look beyond, he says. Fear not. All that you expect and more will be yours in glory—"If it were not so, I would have told you."

We propose to consider *wherein* it is *the presumption of our Christianity* that there is *a heaven* for the people of God.

*First:* A heaven is to be presumed *by the character and the life of Jesus on earth.*

Look upon him as you will, I challenge the blackest infidelity to say that he belongs to this earthly sphere. You would know that his Father's house was not even on some most favored island of our globe, nor in some royal domain such as monarchs have fitted up for themselves. His works, his tastes, his longings, his affinities, were every hour proving him to be the tenant of some brighter realm. And his miraculous life, and his miraculous resurrection and ascension, all discovered to men that a better world than ours must claim him, and that somewhere in God's great universe there must be a land of purity and blessedness and peace and glory such as would be *congenial* to him.

He came down amongst these human circles and traversed our sinful sphere, a living exception to the race, a personal contradiction to the great universal law of depravity.

So he announced himself as *the Way* to some other region, and *the Truth* in open refutation of the world's errors, and *the Life* in the highest sense, and beyond all this dying life of ours. And wherever he went it was as if odors from the Isles of the Blest were emptied upon the air — the sick revived, the dying were healed, the dead were raised, and all pointed to a superior department of being. It was as if the whole host of angels had been sent down to open to view that other circle of society and that upper world of light. No wonder that his disciples, catching gleams of his glory, asked him, "Whither goest thou?" And no wonder that his reply to their question was,

"Whither I go ye know and the way ye know," but ye can not follow me *now*. No wonder that beholders inquired whence he came.

And therefore it is, that however our Christian faith may be puzzled to fix the locality of heaven —in what fair planet or star of God's universe— Jesus is the blest object whose home, we know, is heaven. And we are content to rest on this assurance, that where he is, there we shall be also. Not in a mere spirit-world, for there is his glorified *body!* His *life*, it was, no less than his doctrine, which brought life and immortality to light. And therefore it is that, following in his footsteps, we know we can trace the shining road to where he enters in and is at home in the Father's house.

And so also, *secondly: All the relations which he instituted here with sinners proved that his object was to make us fellow-residents with him in heaven.*

He showed us, that surely as there is such a world of blessedness, so surely he came to take us up thither. If he is the Living Head and we are the members, how can these parts of the one body be forever separated, or where shall the living members be, but with the Living Head? This was the whole drift of his teachings, and the whole tendency of his system. So that if you should strike out from our Christianity the *heritage beyond*, to which it invites us, it would be only a system of severest disappointment, and most self-contradictory in all its terms. "If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable."

But consider, if he is *Shepherd* of the sheep, where, or when, is the shepherd office to be exercised so delicately and tenderly and surely and effectively, as when we come to the dark valley and deep shadow of death—with a view to our passing triumphantly through all the darkness and danger to the other side? And so, if he is the *Life* of men, as the living vine to the branches, is it not in reference to the life eternal, which is only at best initiated here below, of which this is but the infancy?

The religion of Christ has for its foundation-doctrine the truth of the resurrection, as instanced in the triumphant resurrection of Jesus, and as to be gloriously illustrated and fulfilled in that of his redeemed people. And he is not only the Resurrection, but he is also the Life Eternal which makes the resurrection precious. And so, if this religion be not our strength in a dying hour, and our comfort over the open grave, it fails just where we need it most, and where it promises us the strongest consolation. But here it does *not fail.* Here it blazes forth in its utmost effulgence at the darkest point.

So also, *thirdly, God has allowed us glimpses of that heavenly world, from where the gates have stood ajar for a moment,* and *the inner glory has been revealed.*

Enoch, the seventh from Adam, entered in there without the formality of death; and his body was *changed,* as the bodies of those believers shall be changed who are found on earth when Christ shall

appear at the consummation. *How* that primitive saint went up we know not. It seemed to have been by some vanishing, as of one that is caught up in a cloud, or a whirlwind of glory; or as of some star that merges into day—"as sets the morning star, that goes not down behind the darkened west." And *so* that heavenly state was revealed to the antediluvian world.

And then, again, under the law—Elijah, the prophet of Israel, was caught up with all the display of a chariot of fire, and horses of fire, and a whirlwind.

And then, still further, and nearer to us, that same Elijah was seen again—returned to earth along with Moses, who died on Mount Nebo; and there they stood together, in their robes of light, on that golden summit of the transfiguration.

And still again, and still nearer, Jesus himself was caught up from Olivet in a cloud of glory and parted from the sight of men.

These mountain summits of the earth have thus seemed to touch the skies; and gleams of "the Delectable Mountains" have gilded these very hilltops where we travel in darkness, looking out for the eternal day. And so, whenever a fellow-Christian has passed in there from our own circles, we have seen something of the celestial effulgence beaming through where he entered.

And *fourthly: This Christian system throughout implies such an estate beyond, as it is a system of longing and praying and waiting and progressing till we arrive where Jesus is.* The heart, therefore

that has not been touched with any yearning for such a blest abode, has not begun to conceive what the Christian system is, as a system of aspiration and elevation and salvation by Jesus Christ, and of glorification with him forever.

But every believer has had his faith rise to some height of heavenly contemplation, has had it, more or less, take in that other and celestial sphere, and, with the help of Scripture, he has pictured to himself its glories, and has, perhaps, imagined himself seated down in its eternal mansions. Just as when the traveller has climbed the highest summit to get a view of the Alpine snow-peaks, and he has found the mists gathered round the glorious crests, and he has sat down in weariness and disappointment. But presently the mist-clouds have parted and, one by one, the snow-peaks stood forth to view, and then all of them together, wreathed round with the gossamer, and standing forth in every various phase of majesty and beauty, and then at sunset the golden glory, resting on the summits, have made them to seem like the gate-way of heaven—all the more luminous and glorious for the circling veils which at first had obscured them.

> "And what if earth
> Be but the shadow of heaven and things therein
> Each to other like, more than on earth is thought?"

These heavens and this earth are types of a new heaven and a new earth which shall be.

"Many a joyful sight is given,
Many a lovely vision here:
Hill and vale and starry even,
Friendship's smile—affection's tear—
These are shadows, sent in love,
*Of realities above.*"

And now Jesus speaks to warrant all that the most lively conception has ever painted—to legitimate it all as none too glowing, none too bright, none too assured; that the reality is rather infinitely transcending all that we ever conceived. He describes it, rather, by *what it is not*, than by what it is. No night there; no sorrow, nor sighing, nor tears, nor any more pain. He says that this Christian faith of ours, that goes out and fixes upon such a blessed world, shall in nowise be disappointed; that all that we have inferred from his teachings and from our longings about that estate, shall be more than realized in the fruition. And that "if it were not so"—that there is a Father's house for *us* as well as for *him*—he would not have allowed us to remain a moment under the misconception, but he would have told us not to expect it.

*First*, then, the heavenly world is fairly to be presumed — considered as *the Father's house of Jesus.*

We come in our feeble faith, like those early disciples, beholding this Lamb of God, wondering and asking of him—"Where dwellest thou?" And he replies to us—"*Come and see!*" He has excited our desire to dwell where he dwells; his home we

would have to be our home. All his human intercourse has awakened this sympathy and affinity. And shall it be disappointed? We hear him all along his path crying, "Follow me: I will show you the way: I will clear it of obstacles. Come on." We inquire, therefore, to what realm he belongs. And it is to this very point that he here speaks, and enlightens us about the extensive arrangements there in his Paternal abode.

He means, clearly, that there can be no such restrictions and limitations there, as belong to these earthly habitations—that in his Father's house there is room for all the children, no less than for himself. Did he not say to Mary, "I ascend unto my Father and *your* Father, and unto my God and your God?" And is not his Sonship the very basis of our sonship? Do we not become sons just because he is the eternal "well-beloved Son," "the first-born among many brethren," who has the birthright place and privilege? And "he is not ashamed to call us brethren," just because "he hath prepared for us a city." And if this be so, his Father's house is our Father's house, and what he means here is that the grand *Paternal homestead has many mansions.*

The first idea in this phrase is the *manifold accommodations.*

There is such amplitude, such variety. This could also be fairly presumed. Not all alike for all the children, for the very reason that they are not all alike in respect to training and culture and development. As the life yonder is to be presumed

from the life here, so *that* life must be supposed to be the continuation of this, according to the laws of mental and moral being.

Some may reach that heavenly land the merest babes in Christ, and some all dwarfed comparatively—no high expansion of their powers in abundant works of faith and love—no full unfolding of the soul to the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ. And though there shall be no imperfection which could imply defect or infer the presence of sin, yet all perfection is not the same. There is a perfect child, and yet that is not a perfect man, nor *that* a perfect *giant*, nor *that* a perfect artist, nor a perfect warrior. According to the pathway of each, must be the landing; according to the race must be the chaplet; and according to the victory must be the crown. Even among angels there are cherubim and seraphim—angels whose specialty is knowledge, and angels whose specialty is *love*. So there are archangels, and among these there are thrones and dominions and principalities and powers. There is room there for the babes in Christ. There must therefore be an infinite variety, according to an infinite aptitude. All shall not live in the same house, but each under the same spanning firmament of love, and as under the same grand *roof* of the Father's house of Jesus.

The *next idea* of the phrase is, that these manifold accommodations are *dwelling-places—abodes*, as the term is—not temporary, like these tents which are so easily blown down by the gale, or swept

away with the flood, but places for an abiding residence.

This also could be fairly presumed. If we are pilgrims, as we are, we are journeying to a better *father-land.* If we are disturbed in these poor houses of clay that are crushed before the moth, it is that we may enter the more permanent habitation.

This Christian hope, that, with such steady finger points us forward and upward, points to this, if to any thing—an *enduring home.* That which this shifting scene makes us long for—to get to some quiet retreat that shall be "incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away"; that which is the high *ideal* of the soul is precisely what is variously painted to our vision, and delineated in the text. All variety there to suit the case of every redeemed and pure spirit; and all permanency to leave no fear of change, nor any pang at the prospect of departure.

And then, that this abiding residence shall be *home*—cheery and blessed; the fondest resting-place of the soul, the dear centre of its joys and the sphere of its endearments. More welcome than home could ever be to any poor traveller who comes in, after the dusty and famishing and sleepless travel to the happy homestead on earth; more hearty and happy greetings of the great glorified family, through all the membership. All that was lacking to make home the perfect fruition of every bliss, and that to all eternity, shall be there enjoyed. Absence from the body becomes bliss,

because it is to be "at home with the Lord," as the term is.

All analogy warrants this conclusion. The bird upon whose back God has fashioned the wings, finds the broad sky made for it to fly in; and the fish whose fins are fitted for the watery element finds the seas and rivers for its appropriate life; and shall the soul that is winged and plumed for glory, find no sky in which to soar?

And so, in truth, it is, as to all the Scriptural types or images of our home in heaven; they are the fullest response to our felt necessity. Therefore this is the *nature of the presumption.* There shall be the utter absence of all evil, and the fullest presence and experience of all good. Whatever we sigh for here in vain, whatever we could possibly enjoy there, whatever could enter into the cup of delight for a ransomed creature, must needs be comprised in that one magic word, *heaven!* And hence whatever sorrow or sighing or pain there is here, must give place to the rich and overwhelming enjoyment. "In thy presence is *fulness of joy*" —such as fills the vessel to the utmost, and makes it brim over with the fulness.

Consider then, further, the general idea involved in the item of a mansion is, that it shall be *our possession* of a dwelling—not rented, but owned.

We are always aiming here to possess somewhat that we can call ours, especially an abode which we call a home. We are often fretting for more than we have or can have. This aim, that in some worldly minds rises to the pitch of an ava-

ricious grasping, adding house to house, and field to field, and leading to the enlargement of barns and storehouses, as the depositories of their goods, is, in the limited sense, natural. And, in so far as it is a legitimate aim, the presumption is, that heaven shall be the sphere for its highest gratification.

So the Scripture, alluding to this principle, delineates that happy estate as an inheritance. It is an inheritance, as a patrimony, coming to us through our sonship. "If children, then heirs!" If children *of God*, then *heirs of God;* and if children of the same Father as Jesus himself, then joint heirs with Jesus. Sharers with him in the heritage—so that whatever belongs to him becomes ours to enjoy as partners of his heritage, members of the body of which he is the Head.

Then it is *a possession of holiness.*

This is an *inward* treasure. This, therefore, is an article of wealth not reckoned by the banker, nor quoted in the market nor valued by the world. And yet it is just the richest of all treasures, because it is an estate of the soul; *real estate* in the highest sense, as distinct from mere chattel and movable estate, and inalienable. And just because all peace and rest and true felicity must have their seat in the inward condition—just as the glory of this Gospel is to open a fountain within the soul, as a well of water, springing up to everlasting life, so we accept this as the highest boon—the possession of an undefiled nature, *personal estate* as being always available.

This internal grace makes the inheritance undefiled, as no power in the universe could make it to us, without this. To bear the very likeness of Jesus—not in any mere superficial impression, such as a stamp upon the wax could give, not in the mere *physique*, resembling the man Christ Jesus, but in an inward and spiritual transformation, to have the elements of the divine life in the soul, so as to be living on the same great principles as God lives—*ah! this is it*—with divine tastes and heavenly affinities, aims and joys. This is the chief possession.

And just because it so belongs to the very texture of the soul itself, it can never be alienated in the least. This, therefore, must be the nature of the heavenly mansion. As it implies *rest*, and *home*, and these can not exist in their highest sense without holiness of nature, so we find that it is no palatial residence even of most enduring fabric, for even the solid granite would crumble in the heat or be demolished in some convulsion of matter. The home and the rest and the inheritance that is incorruptible and undefiled must be the soul's possession of an inward holiness, which is shared with Jesus Christ—the divine nature of which we become partakers through him. It is therefore notified to us that it is a home in the Father's house, a home for us as children of the Father, and as bearing his image and likeness within for all eternity; and so heaven must be, according to the whole presumption of the case, the possession of whatever would enhance at all

the enjoyment of the blessed. This idea is also involved in the many and various mansions, to suit the particular case of each—of Abraham, of Isaac, of Jacob, and of you and me.

So it is spoken of, again, as a *kingdom*, meaning evidently that just as one's home is his kingdom, in so far as it is a home to him, so there the redeemed saint shall have fullest range and sway amidst all the wealth of delights, privileged to enter upon the occupancy of whatever realm or sphere of pleasure belongs to the kingdom of Jesus, wearing the crown of that kingdom, though he were a beggar here on earth; proprietor, now, by virtue of his heavenly heritage, of such a domain as no mortal ever conceived, with royal titles upon his breast, royal diadem upon his brow, all such as Jesus himself wears, and all possessed by virtue of oneness with him.

Now, if you stagger at the thought of such glory for a child of the dust, consider what is the presumption of the whole Christian system. It is free grace to sinners. It is nothing for any being of our race except in Jesus. But it is every thing in Jesus, offered to the vilest of mankind. If he is the Head, and we are the members of one and the same body, then in this complex person all the fulness above must be enjoyed. Then take the survey. Ask what inheritance is his, and call it yours also, if you stand in Christ. Is it that a redeemed sinner is to be placed on a footing with righteous Abel, or with Abraham the friend of God, or with John who leaned on the bosom of Jesus, or with

Mary his mother, or Mary who anointed his feet for his burial, or with *Gabriel?* No! but with *Jesus himself.*

But, further, there is the possession of *knowledge* which must be presumed as belonging to heaven.

This idea is involved in the text. For it is the joyous certainty and realization that is here promised beyond all doubt. For knowledge is the aim of our higher nature, which must surely be gratified there.

Ye doubting Christians, who wonder what is beyond, in the great future, I tell you now, he says, as you shall soon rapturously know it for yourselves, if you are children. And "if it were not so I would have told you." The tree of knowledge in the midst of the old paradise must surely reappear in the new paradise, along with the tree of life. And this fruit shall no more be interdicted. Then it shall be notified, "Of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, thou mayest eat." It never was the nature of the fruit, but only the nature of finite man, that made that original restriction in Eden.

We are left to inference here, as to what range of knowledge, what researches into God's works, what traversing of the material and moral universe, what high calculations in the profoundest science and philosophy shall be allowed us. No tougue can tell. But we conclude that such investigations as the mind is fitted for, and such as have only been distantly approached here, will fill the utmost capacity there and forever. With

powers of mind immensely enlarged, and faculties exquisitely refined and glorified, the boundless field will open to the enraptured view. So that there never will come a period, all down those interminable ages, when knowledge will cease to flow in upon the delighted intellect, or when any barrier will be set up to the range of the mind in all the fields of exploration. God, creation, history, providence, Scripture, redemption, retribution — such themes, such volumes, spread out for all eternity! How Jesus will communicate of this boundless knowledge. Already he says, "I have called you friends, for all things that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you." And we shall enter into the knowledge of Jesus as he is, in all his offices, in his personal offices for us, the full knowledge of redeeming love in all its annals, where it passeth knowledge here.

And further still, there is included *all the appropriate occupation for all eternity.*

It is to be presumed from the whole Christian system, that all fitting *employment* is reserved for us in heaven. And this idea is also involved in the text. For home has never its charm from a mere lazy indolence, where time hangs heavy; and eternity would be insufferable. The home occupations sweeten the delights of home, give relish to the daily meal, create ever-increasing bonds of sympathy in the household, and give play to all the finest feelings of our nature. What is home if there be no objects of fond endearment to engage the thought and occupy the attention and

affection, and give zest to the daily occupation? And so, heaven is spoken of as a sanctuary into which the Great High-priest has entered, and we enter with him as "priests unto God and the Father." It is a round of priestly services, chiefly the offering of the sacrifice of praise.

Yet who shall say that the celestial tenantry are debarred from doing good to others in their sublime spheres? Not indeed, as charity can here be done, among the needy brethren, but as angels minister now to us, so may we not minister to other orders of being, or even to angels, to return somewhat of their manifold and blessed service, reciting to them at least the story of our personal salvation? And in the glorified body, those spiritual frames in which we shall be clothed shall have their highest employment—works worthy of the house "not made with hands, eternal in the heavens."

And, finally, as further belonging to the idea of the text, and as the necessary charm of the many mansions, is *the glorious personal and social reunion*, which must be enjoyed there—the mutual gratulation, each in the other rejoicing, all rejoicing in Jesus, and Jesus rejoicing in all.

Already as one enters before us we seem to overhear the happy greetings of the great family within, and to catch glimpses of the glory through the open door-way. What do we long for in heaven next to seeing Jesus, so much as we long for a recognition of Christian friends gone before? There is a chord in every heart which is touched and

thrilled by this expectation. It is not explicitly revealed, just in so many words, but it is most positively implied and presumed. The royal mourner, the sweet Psalmist of Israel, as he wept over a departed child expressed a balmy thought for bereaved parents, who have laid their treasures early in the tomb, when he said, "He shall not come to me, but I shall go to him."

What is home without such a recognition of the members in the happy circle? Could it be that God has fitted up the *Father's house* for the children, with all its boundless hospitalities, and yet they who have gone up thither from the same earthly household shall not know each other there? The joy you daily take in greeting your relatives and friends—nay, even the pure pleasure you feel in collecting their photographs within a clasped volume of your own, turning over the leaves of such a magic mirror, where you gather them at will in a sweet circle around you—all this is only the natural inward yearning which is to be so perfectly gratified there. No matter how refined and exquisitely attenuated shall be that spiritual body it shall be *a body* nevertheless; all the more delicate and fairy-like as it shall put off this grossness of the common flesh. And when even the image which the light of day imprints upon the snow-white paper smiles upon you, and seems to speak, though it be only a thing of the sunlight, could it be that the spiritual body should have no features, or that those features which that *soul* has seemed to make should not be for the delighted eye of

companion and bosom friend? And should we be allowed to go through the streets of that New Jerusalem inquiring in vain for those whom our soul loveth, and whom we expected to meet again, and to greet again, in the eternal *reunion* there? So Jesus comforted the weeping sisters when he said, "Your brother shall rise again;" and he comforted the sorrowing Mary at his sepulchre by the joyous words, "I ascend unto my Father, and your Father." Oh! how could heaven be heaven indeed, if such a yearning of our hearts were denied us, and if we could never recognize again the pure and lovely and good who shone here in the image of Jesus, and were folded together with us, in the same Shepherd's arms?

Yes, and more than this. Why should we not recognize all the great and good of whom we have ever read or heard—Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and Paul, and John, and the Marys, and the martyrs, and the reformers, and all the great benefactors of our race? Why not? Shall not heaven be made most pleasant to us by our being introduced to them, one by one, among the glorified throng, and learning the story of salvation from the tongue of each? And then if Jesus was a friend on earth, "the chiefest among ten thousand," it must be surpassing joy to recognize his features, and to see the halo of glory that sits upon his thorn-crowned forehead, and to behold the scars of his crucifixion beaming in his hands and feet and side. At the resurrection, they who have loved him and longed for his abode shall be clothed in a body like his

own. "He will change our vile body that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body." "And as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly." We shall know each other there, even as we are known here. And so they know us now. They look out of the window upon our path, as we are led by the good Shepherd, and so they await our return, as they see us nearing our heavenly home.

"Jerusalem the Golden;
There all our birds that flew,—
Our flowers but half-unfolden,
Our pearls that turned to dew,—
And all the glad life-music
Now heard no longer here,
Shall come again to greet us,
As we are drawing near."

My brethren, if heaven is *our proper home*—if there our hearts and treasures are—then death ought to be welcome. Nay, then we may bear poverty, losses, crosses, all ills of life, and rejoice in the glorious prospect. Nay, we could even say, like a devout Christian on his death-bed, "*I am homesick.*"

But is this your real affinity? Would you find heaven to be your home, even if God should open wide its gates to you? Would you find there your home circle, your fond endearments, your favorite occupations, your most cherished friendships? And would your freed spirit sit down there as in *your Father's house*, and among your brethren of the same *happy family?* Or would your heaven

be in the festive circle of worldliness? Would it be, then, that all the glories of that blessed realm should afford you no pleasure, just because of your earthy and depraved tastes and desires—just because of an unrenovated nature? Would you yourself probably feel there as one feels who is ushered into a festive company, where he is an utter stranger and is not recognized by the circle, just because he has nothing in common with them? Then it is not the fault of the place, nor of the proprietor. It is not God's fault, nor any fault of heaven. But it is the alienation of your own soul from all that is good and happy and blest in the presence of God and the Lamb. And God is just when he says to such—"*Depart from me, I never knew you.*"

# XX.

## THE DOUBLE CALL.

"And the Spirit and the Bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely."—REV. xxii. 17.

This closing passage of Scripture is a splendid summing up of every thing that is inviting in the Gospel.

When Christ had unfolded to the exiled apostle a symbolical sketch of human history in this Apocalypse, he closes with that which is the one grand end of all Scripture, *a universal call and offer* of reconciliation and eternal life. So, that it is, as if, on the back of the prophetic roll in which all human events are outlined, there is stamped for every beholder this Gospel message—*Come.* As if, in view of all the historic future, men's one great leading interest must always be, to come hither to Christ—no matter what events are happening, or may happen. As if all elements and agencies which enter into the working fabric of human affairs, could give only one and the same invitation —*Come.* And as though all providential agents, all angels, cherubim and seraphim, were taking up the call, and sounding out, over and over, in

every form, with every variety of anthem and appeal, the message—*Come! come! come!*

In the immediate context, the Lord Jesus has twice announced himself as speedily coming to the world for the scenes of the final consummation. He says, "Behold I come quickly;" and then again, he repeats it, "Behold I come quickly and my reward is with me, to give to every man according as his work shall be." And now it would seem, that the former part of our text is *a call to Christ to come to men*, and the latter part, *a summons to sinners to come to Christ.* As if after the prophetic unfoldings were all given, in vision here, it remained only to put forth in one glowing and glorious sentence, what may be regarded as a concentration of the whole Scripture, calling upon Christ to come to men, our world—and calling upon men, the world, to come to Christ, as is predicted and portrayed here.

In the previous context, Jesus declares himself as the Alpha and the Omega of all history; and, accordingly, as being at once the Author and Finisher of this temporal estate. He repeatedly announces himself as coming quickly. "Behold I come quickly, and my reward is with me." And here, immediately, and as a response to such announcement, the Spirit is represented as calling out —"*Come.*" And the Church, the Bride of Christ, *echoes* the call to *come.* And then, every hearer of so glad a declaration and response is bidden to join the acclamation, and to bid Jesus *come* and *welcome* to this waiting earth.

And then, as if this, his second advent, must be that which shall make it infinitely desirable and every way encouraging for sinners to come to Christ, that so his coming to judgment, and coming for the salvation of his people may be the present urgent motive with all men, the call goes out to the thirsty soul, whoever he be, to *come*, and whoever will, is entreated to take the water of life freely.

And *first, the Spirit in prophecy calls on Christ to come.*

As to the nature of this coming, we shall only say that it is in accordance with the whole spirit and scope of prophecy. It is that coming in power and great glory for which the Church looks to build up his kingdom in all the earth, and to establish his millennial reign. It is that coming by his Spirit in mighty outpourings upon all flesh such as was only partially fulfilled at Pentecost.

We need not here discuss the question of a personal premillennial advent—whether we may look for Christ to appear visibly in person before the millennium, to achieve what the Church and the instituted means of grace can not do, to consume the wicked upon the earth by the literal breath of his mouth and destroy them by the brightness of his coming. All along the ages the prophetic announcement was of the *Comer*. Always, it was in drapery suited to the time, that this glorious advent was depicted.

There were *four great predictions* of Christ in the patriarchal age—one for each of the four great

epochs of the Church's history, before the settlement in Canaan. There was a prediction of Christ *at the Fall*, and another *at the Flood*, and another *at the Covenant* with Abraham, and another *at the Exile* from Egypt. And in each of these, the prophetic vision reaches beyond the first advent, and takes in also the second.

When the serpent had just tempted the first pair, the Comer was announced as the Destroyer of the serpent. "And for this purpose, the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil." But when he came and spoiled principalities and powers on the cross, the bruising of the serpent's head was not fully accomplished so much as the bruising of the Saviour's heel. The Spirit therefore, in that first promise from the earth's earliest history, calls out to Jesus to come in his second, triumphal advent, to put all enemies under his feet.

And even in the antediluvian times, Enoch who walked with God as a child walks hand-in-hand with the parent, overreached all human history, and announced the second advent of Jesus without even speaking of the first advent. "Behold the Lord cometh with ten thousand of his saints to execute judgment upon all."

And so, at the era of the *Flood*, the Spirit cries out in the promise to Noah, and calls for that predicted enlargement of Japhet, and for his dwelling in the tents of Shem. This can ensue only upon Christ's coming, in the ingathering of the world's dominant races to a pure Christianity.

And so the *Spirit* cries out, in the covenant promise given to Abraham—calling on Jesus as the seed of blessing to COME.

More and more the prediction labors for accomplishment. In this promised seed, all the families of the earth are now waiting to be blessed. The benighted and down-trodden, the infidel and idolater, the civilized and barbarous—are they not all in an attitude of longing expectancy, crying for deliverance, and there is no deliverer for them but Jesus; sighing for light, and he it is, who coming into the world, lighteth every man. And so, also, at the time of bondage in Egypt, the prediction had a voice which is still crying for accomplishment. For the Shiloh has come. But the gathering of the nations to him, in a hearty and universal obedience, waits its glorious fulfilment. It is advancing. The march of the world's millions is plainly onward toward this goal of human blessing.

But observe, *in the second place, the Bride also*, is here represented as joining in this call to Christ to come. This is the Church, the Spouse of Christ. Already in the midst of the ancient economy this is the very attitude in which the Church is depicted, in that wonderful Song of Solomon. We hear her voice as that of a desolate, lone woman, searching about the city for her absent partner —inquiring of the watchman, in most touching strains, where he may be found. To her his absence is represented under the images of scorching suns, freezing winter, pelting rain, pitchy night, dreary desert—and she can not sleep nor take any

comfort till she find her beloved, till she hear his voice at the lattice, till his fingers drop myrrh on the handles of the lock. All language is exhausted to express that connubial love which makes her go about through the streets and lanes of the city, crying for his coming. Nay, through the fields, and over the mountains, she searches for him, and her cry is still the same earnest, impassioned, beseeching—come! come! "Come with me from Lebanon, my Spouse, with me from Lebanon. Look from the top of Amana, from the top of Shenir and Hermon; from the lions' dens, from the mountains of the leopards." This is the restless plaint of the true Church, in all ages, crying and entreating until the Bridegroom shall come.

And the heart of genuine faith and hope and love has always found fitting expression in these matchless passages of that Song of Songs, which is Solomon's. It is an index of returning consciousness in the Church of our day, when she finds these stanzas of the Canticles such as suit her lively desire, when she goes through our cities, in the person of her members, crying aloud, and weeping for the coming of the Bridegroom.

And the Church in all the world is earnestly, anxiously looking out for the Master's coming. She is *so* interpreting all his methods of providence and all the stupendous steps in history, all the upturnings and overturnings among the nations; and nothing is of so great moment to this spouse of Christ, as that he may come in all these commotions, and that on this accursed earth, where

he was derided and condemned and crucified by sinners, he may be exalted and enthroned in power and great glory, holding the kingdoms as all his own.

And *now*, seeing that this is the outcry of the Spirit and the outcry of the Church, calling upon Christ to come, in keeping with this proclamation, what is needed is, that *every one* by whom the promise or the response is heard, *shall take up the cry, and re-echo it all around.* "*Let him that heareth say, Come!*"

Every hearer of the Gospel should become a proclaimer of it in his sphere, to his circle. It is in this way that the divine plan contemplates its universal promulgation. If the iron is to attract, it must first be magnetized. God has pleased to make men ministers to their fellow-men. And there is no method so natural, nor is there any so efficient.

It is not supposable that angelic ministries, though so much more exalted, would subserve so direct and valuable an object as man's own ministries to his fellow-man. Hence the Godhead revealed itself in the God-man—not in the God-angel, nor God-seraph, but in the *God-man.*

And he who is so blessed above others, as to be a hearer of this Gospel sound, is summoned to take it up and echo it. This is only what he would find it in his heart to do, if he heard some other glad tidings, in which all the multitudes are as deeply concerned as in self. This is only an instinct of our better nature—to *tell* the good news which is

so fitted to gladden other hearts, to give utmost currency to such a heavenly message, as will cheer the laborer at his work, and the prisoner in his dungeon, and bid the weeping and desolate children of want rejoice.

And then, again, if this were done at this moment, simply with the aim of each Christian man, bringing home the message to another so as each to duplicate himself in the kingdom of Christ, then how long, think you, would it take for the whole world to become converted? If there were only half a million of true Christians in the world, and each should be the means of bringing one soul to Christ in a year, and these should go on, each duplicating himself in this way, yearly, every soul on the globe would be converted within thirteen years.

But instead of half a million of Christians on the earth, there are twenty-five to thirty times that number, who make a credible profession of Christianity. Alas! that such mighty forces should be so dormant. Oh! when the *waking time* shall come for the church, and this immense army shall be led forth in battle array by the Master, see how soon this globe of ours will be won for Christ!

It has been computed that if the work of the world's conversion should now begin for the first, in the ministry of a single man, and he should win one soul to Christ during the first year, and these two should do the like in the second year, each winning his man, so that four should be at the work the third year; at this rate of reduplication,

the whole world of one thousand millions would be won to Christ before the first laborer had come to his grave in the ordinary course of nature. In the United States if each Christian should bring in five more during the year, the whole population would be converted in a short twelve-month.

And such a plan is precisely what we need this moment to have in operation—that each hearer of the Gospel become a petitioner for Christ's coming, and a laborer for it, sounding the invitation of the Spirit and the Bride to all within the reach of his voice. Then it would be as *signal* words of command are passed along the ranks of an army—by each man repeating the order to those beyond; or, as a word of good cheer is passed around a social circle, like the arrival of a friend at the door; or, as the news of *peace*, brought to the wharf of a city from a remote land, is echoed from mouth to mouth along the streets, till it reach the utmost border of the population. *So* it would be with this glad message of the Gospel. What the Church needs just now is *individual effort*—every one within her pale, every one within the sound of her message, becoming active in this glorious cause; every hearer becoming an evangelizer; all her energies thus brought out, all her agencies set at work, all her lively sympathies enlisted, as in any other grand scheme for impressing and influencing men; mind operating upon mind, the voice of every hearer pleading with Christ to come, and pleading with his fellow-men to come to Christ: so that the individual effort will direct itself to indi-

vidual conversion, each one laboring with some other to whom he recites the message, and pleading with him to be reconciled to God.

And now, just because the kingdom of heaven is at hand, and just because Christ has announced himself as coming quickly, and just because the Spirit and the Bride, in response to this announcement, call on him most earnestly to come—therefore, the words of invitation to men may be addressed with more emphasis and urgency, to come to him who already has come to us as Redeemer, and is soon coming again as Conqueror and Judge. In what terms shall the closing invitation of the Gospel be couched? "Let him that is athirst, come!"

*Thirst—thirst*—is the very expression of raging desire. It reaches to the soul's depths, and all agony of longing was expressed in this one bitter word, when Jesus on the cross said, "*I thirst.*" It is only a hint on earth of what inexpressible desire rages in the bosom of a soul when it is lost, when it is in this flame of torment and has no drop of water to quench it. So Dives in hell said, "*I thirst.*" It is because all men thirst with unsatisfied cravings and need to find the fountain of life and blessedness, that this is the form here of the universal offer. As much as to say—every thirsting soul come hither—whatever your unappeased longings, whatever your feverish, burning appetite, whatever your unquenched desires—come hither!

Is this mistaken by some as a limitation of the Gospel call to such as can prove that they have

the described thirst? So it is that Satan and an evil conscience hasten to pervert the most genial, cordial words of Jesus; so as to rob the Gospel of all its grace and bar up the very open way to heaven. So many a weak and trembling conscience understands the Gospel call as limited to those who are weary and heavy laden, as the Scripture describes; and at once they are laboring to find some evidence that they labor, to make proof of this quality in themselves as something meritorious. Or else they are counting themselves as excluded, because they fall short of this description.

Just as if any one should stand amidst a throng of famished paupers, and should say, "Let him that is hungry come to me for food." Would any oue think that he must first prove himself hungry, before he could be entitled to apply under the call? Or rather would it be understood by all that the mention of such a class was only to illustrate the grace, only to show that the provision was ample for all the need; and that here the hungry could find food, the thirsty could find drink, the weary and heavy laden could find rest. The call is in terms of most unrestricted invitation—not limited by the kind of thirst, or the measure of thirst, or the character of the thirsting ones; much less limited by any secret decree of God, but "Ho *every one* that thirsteth, come ye to the waters!" "*Let him that is athirst, come!*" For here the fountain is opened, here the well-springs gush up and brim over, and flow deep and full at your very feet.

But I have known a difficulty to be raised by

tender consciences about the matter of *coming*. "Oh," says one, "If I could only come in the sense of this call, or if I could come aright, or if I could know that I had really come at all to the right quarter." And so, some have debated and doubted about the *coming*, as if *here* was some mysterious difficulty, some secret impossible sense of the requirement upon which all the emphasis is placed; making the imitation a practical nullity, making this act of coming as much a legal service as the offering of rams and bullocks on the Jewish altar! It would seem as if to meet this very difficulty of some, that this last closing form of the Gospel invitation has in it not even such a word, about which there could possibly be any doubt, or which could occasion any delay.

Let it be known, then, that it is nothing meritorious in the manner of coming. No secret grace in the gait or attitude—whether it be running, walking, creeping—whether it be coming with many prayers and tears or with few. It is coming to Christ that is requisite. Not how you come, but to whom you come. This is the *all in all*.

There have been all styles of coming. The young man who came running and kneeling, and made the best show of devotion, went away disappointed because he found nothing that he wanted. The blind beggar by the way-side, that only cried out from where he was, as the eager throng rushed by in the track of Jesus, he was blessed where he sat, and bidden to get up, and receive all benediction from Christ himself. So it is sometimes

spoken of as looking, or seeking, or following, or trusting.

Nay, my hearers, there is here nothing obscure, nothing mystical or perplexing, to any honest inquirer. It is just the freest possible invitation—"Whosoever *will*, let him take the water of life, freely." Not, let him come and take, but let him take, where he is; as if the cup of life's waters were pressed to his very lips, and it is only *to take it, if he will.*

There is nothing to stand between the willing and the receiving. It is just the single, only question, whether a man will have all the hopes of the Gospel, all the salvation of Jesus, all the heritage of the blessed, as an unmixed gratuity—whether he will take it as a gift.

Let no perversions crowd in here. This is the last effort of the Holy Ghost, to clear the Gospel offer of all obscurity, to vindicate it from all objection as inapplicable or inaccessible, to rescue it from all wicked perversion, as unsuited to any case, or as covering some undefined impossibilities, under the guise of a fair and free and full gratuity. Let it be known everywhere, that this last sublime utterance of the universal call and offer, is in that form which need not be misunderstood, for language could not make it simpler, plainer, clearer; and there is no mystery, no perplexity, about it. *If you want it, take it. Whoever will have it it is his.*

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